

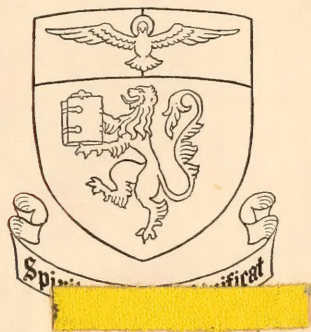




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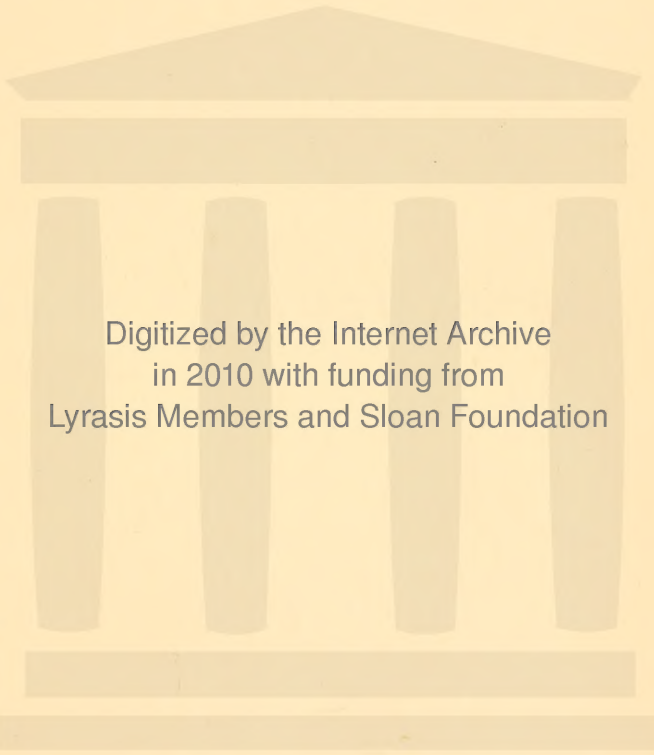
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LIFE IN SOUTHERN NIGERIA



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LIFE IN SOUTHERN NIGERIA

THE MAGIC, BELIEFS AND CUSTOMS
OF THE IBIBIO TRIBE

BY

P. AMAURY TALBOT

RESIDENT, NIGERIA

AUTHOR OF

"IN THE SHADOW OF THE BUSH : A DESCRIPTION OF THE EKOI OF SOUTHERN NIGERIA"

MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED
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HERE ghosts from long-dead worlds have made their home.
Dark Mangrove boughs form window frame and door.
Of whispering wind-swayed leaves is built each wall :
And the breathless silence is peopled all
With echoes and dreams. While lily-strewn streams
And great smooth creeks form its crystal floor.
Mist-like flit Nymph and Satyr. Wan sea-foam
Laves Nereids' feet upon the shell-strewn shore.
Dryads, half seen, flee twixt the tree trunks tall.
Through breeze and storm-wind, myriad voices call—
Mid glints and gleams, fierce sun's or moon's soft beams—
Seeking, in our deaf ears, to breathe the Lore,
Gleaned, in the days ere Greece and Rome were born,
From long-forgotten worlds and Faiths outworn.

D. A. T.

JUN 30 1964

FOREWORD

ABOUT a year and a half ago, when sending forth my first record of a West African people, I wrote :

“ To my critics I would say that, written in the depths of the bush it describes, far from every book of reference, or the society of those who might have enriched its poverty from the store of their learning, this book claims nothing, save that it strives to tell the story of a little-known people from a standpoint as near as possible to their own.”

The same plea still holds, but there is one great difference between this study of the Ibibio and my former one of the peoples of the Oban District. For the first no information was available save what could be wrung, alone and unaided, from natives, long distrustful, often purposely misleading, and only partially won over after years of patient effort. Here, on the other hand, within a few weeks of arrival in the Eket District, Mr. W. W. Eakin of the Kwa Ibo Mission, who had collected valuable information concerning certain Ibibio customs, generously placed this at our disposal. It has consequently been incorporated, under his name, in this record. To one other the present volume owes more than I can say, *i.e.*, to Etubom Nyung Ansa, better known by his English name, Chief Daniel Henshaw, Native Political Agent for the District. He is a Chief of pure blood and Head of one of the seven ruling families of Calabar, where his ancestors were found in possession on the coming of the early traders.

For over twenty years this man has been a faithful servant of Government, and his life would form a thrilling record of adventure and hairbreadth escapes. His tact and courage have, over and over again, saved the lives of white officials, and to him, and such as he, white rule owes a debt of gratitude only too little realised or expressed. He has visited England, is well educated,—not merely Christianised, but Christian,—and has learnt the lesson of European culture, without losing the simplicity of manner and primitive virtues of his forebears. In too many cases education has deprived the negro of the good qualities of his own people without implanting ours. Up to a short time ago I must confess to a preference for “bush folk” rather than the more civilised specimens of the black race; but that European education may bring the black man to a high pitch of civilisation, without destroying the natural dignity or simple charm of manner to be found among “bush” people, I now gratefully acknowledge.

Not only did Chief Henshaw tell us much that, in all human probability, would never have reached our ears in other ways, but he willingly consented to the labour of working through with us Sir James Frazer’s exhaustive list of questions. Also, from his vast knowledge of native customs and beliefs, he was able to corroborate, or gain confirmation of many a statement gleaned from sources not trustworthy enough to include without verification. Unless specially marked as uncorroborated, no information is given in these pages without the testimony of several independent witnesses.

The wishes of my wife and her sister forbid me to write as I should have liked to do concerning the help given by them; yet it is impossible to let this account appear without at least mentioning that my wife is responsible for the description of scenery, and had they not both been willing at all times, and no matter how weary from long marches and other causes, to take down information or amplify

hurried jottings gleaned during the day, it would have been a physical impossibility, under the stress of political work, that this record should have been written. Not only were they of the greatest help in all branches of research ; but their presence inspired confidence in many women, so crushed by centuries of oppression, that, according to native testimony, a considerable number were only thus emboldened to bring their complaints straight to me. Further, many men openly testified that they were kept from believing the statements of agitators, as to my intention of " making war " upon the people, by the fact, put forward by one of the principal Oronn chiefs, that no white man would have come on " war palaver with his wife on the right hand and her sister on the left ! "

As time passes, it brings with it added humility to counterbalance a growing sense of the urgency of placing on record every scrap of information which can be gleaned from this vast treasure-house of forgotten lore, before the little lamp of antique wisdom—handed from father to son through countless generations, and still burning brightly among some few in the prime of life, and many so feeble that they must, before long, lose hold of earthly things—has been quenched in the onward march of civilisation.

The longer a kind Fate arranges that my life should be spent among such peoples the firmer is borne in upon me the conviction that, to men so placed as I, only the privilege of the first spade-work may be accorded—such, indeed, as falls to the lot of humble excavators who, on the other side of this great continent, wield pick and shovel, to bring the treasures of forgotten cities to the light of day. It seems better, therefore, to rest content with a simple placing on record of facts fresh from the lips of those to whom they have been confided through long lines of forebears, from a past of hoar antiquity, than to strive to present such information in more polished guise. This could only have been made possible by laying it aside till another leave,

when the impressions here recorded would have been dimmed by new happenings amid other races.

Unless the love of this fascinating study deceives me, authors, golden-penned, and writing in the restful atmosphere of panelled libraries at home, may, one day, not disdain to correlate the information thus gleaned, in saddle and dug-out, through bush and creek, by such rude chroniclers as I.

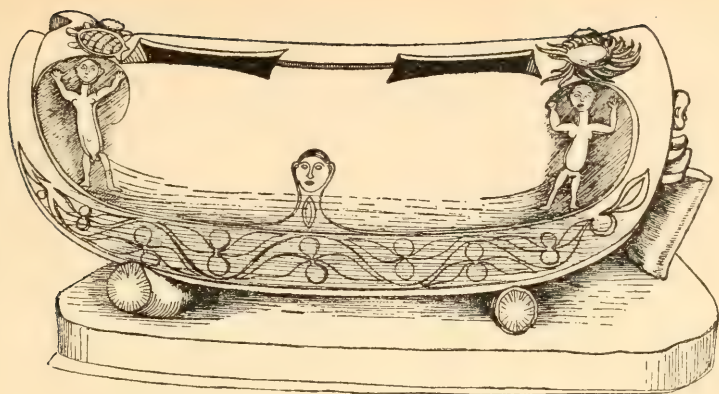
For the more than charity hitherto shown by critics the world over I have no words, adequately, to express thanks. Is it too much to venture, once again, to claim a little indulgence on the ground that only ten months in all were allowed us among this people—nearly a quarter of a million in number, and demanding the utmost vigilance of administration? During this time nearly five thousand miles were covered, mostly on foot or in canoe. The seven Native Courts of the District needed constant supervision, while the mere task of keeping alive, despite the many plots to the contrary, was not unlike the moves in a game of chess, and exacted nearly as much care in the playing.

Yet, in despite of drawbacks and shortcomings, if, as Stevenson says, "In all narration the only way to be clever is to be exact," and "the best story-tellers are the poor, for they must lay their ear to the ground each night": then surely this account, taken straight from the lips of a people who, not at night-time only, but throughout their lives, cling close to the heart of Mother Earth, cannot be quite valueless.

P. AMAURY TALBOT.

DEGAMA, 1914.¹

¹ The delay in publication is due to the outbreak of the War and my absence from England.



THE BIG DRUM AT OKON EKKPO.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND PRINCIPAL DEITIES

THE land bordering the shore of the Gulf of Guinea is one vast littoral, crossed and recrossed by such a network of water-ways that it is possible to pass by canoe from French Dahomey on the one side to the Cameroons on the other without once sighting the sea.

The Eket¹ District, with which this book is chiefly concerned, lies on the coast, some hundred miles east of the Niger delta, and is roughly bounded on the west by the Kwa Ibo and on the east by the Cross River. These two water-ways form the main features of the country and, in taking their parallel courses to the sea, drain the whole area between. The most important of their tributaries is the Ubium, which rises in the north-east corner and flows diagonally through the centre until it joins the Kwa Ibo River in the south-west.

The land is low-lying, for the most part only a few score feet above sea-level, and, though undulating in the centre and north, the highest points rarely reach more than two or three hundred feet. Except for these low hills, which are composed of reddish sands probably formed during a subsidence in Tertiary times, the whole region has been built up from alluvial deposits brought down by the rivers and held back by the mangrove.

The process of land formation can be clearly seen in action throughout the southern portion of the District,

¹ The conventional spelling has been kept, but the word should be written Ekkett or Ekkitt, according to the orthography recommended by the Royal Geographical Society, followed in this book, by which the vowels are pronounced as in Italian and the consonants as in English.

which consists of vast stretches of swamp, under water in the rainy season and difficult to traverse even in the dries, since the ground has a way of sinking beneath the feet and engulfing the unwary in treacherous, unfathomable ooze. Save for a few colonies of fisher-folk, who build frail palm-leaf huts by the shore or pile-like dwellings, borne on arched mangrove roots over the waters whence their livelihood is drawn, these lands are uninhabited except round the estuaries of the two great rivers.

The influence of this environment of water and mangrove swamp can be clearly traced in the character and beliefs of the race. All the most powerful Jujus, as also the principal deities, are connected with the sea or sacred pools and rivers. In some parts lie quagmires, ever shifting, the most deadly of which, situated amid the mud-flats of the Cross River, is known as Hell's Gate or Ghosts' Road, from its power to suck down and engulf; in others are smiling grass-stretches, to trespass upon the thin crust of which means certain death; while cold, swift, crocodile-haunted streams flow by the very door.

Beyond the mangrove belt, which runs parallel to the coast some ten miles in depth, comes a dense evergreen forest—a land of marshes and water-blooms, with the sound in the air of water, where, from spring and grove, by sunshine or moonlight, Naiad and Dryad peep, and through which old-world ghosts walk at noon of day or night. This bush, which once stretched over the rest of the District, but now exists, in its primeval state, only on the borders of streams, in sacred groves or the comparatively small proportion of uninhabited country, contains a large number of flowers new to science,¹ though few in comparison with those found in the Oban country.²

The greater part of the central and northern regions is now composed of fertile palm land, whence spring countless great coconut, piassava, and oil palms, each with its crown of feathered leaves; very different from the southern back-

¹ A description of the first instalment of new flowers found in the Eket District appeared in the *Journal of Botany* of January 1914.

² Nine new genera and 195 new species of which are described in *Catalogue of Talbot's Nigerian Plants*, published by the British Museum in 1913.

ground of sombre mangrove lining the banks of creek and stream, over which lovely lianes trail their fragrant length, lightening the dark foliage with milk-white or bright-hued flowers.

It is perhaps over-fanciful to look upon these two trees, so different in habit and growth, as typical not only of the land, but of the people, and of those strange contrasts and contradictions to be found on every hand.

The palm, springing straight and tall above the lesser vegetation, glorying, as it were, in the free air and sunshine, and waving its proud crown against the blue sky, would seem the very antithesis of the gloomy symbols of blood-stained Juju and fetish worship, which, for many of us, are indissolubly linked with the very thought of West Africa. Yet the sacrifices demanded by the "Spirit of the Palm" were as cruel as those of any other cult. Whenever the great clusters did not ripen, or when only a small crop was vouchsafed, the inhabitants were ordered to search the country-side until a leper was found with face eaten away by the ravages of the disease. Him they dragged to the nearest palm grove and bound by waist and throat to the tallest tree, his arms tied round the trunk as though clasping it. Through both feet were driven long hooked pegs, sharply pointed, which pinned the wretched victim to the ground. There he was doomed to stay, suffering intolerable agonies from wounds, hunger and thirst, in the glare of a tropical sun, until released by merciful death. The bodies of such victims were never buried, but left to decay until sun, rain, and vultures had worked their will, and Isong (Mother Earth) once more received the poor remains into her gentle guardianship.

After this sacrifice, natives assert, there was no dearth of fruit, for the Spirits of the Palms, pleased with the offering, sent forth their rich, orange-hued clusters in such profusion that "over the whole grove men cut till they were tired."

The mangrove, on the other hand, springing from black mud and crocodile-haunted ooze, might seem a fitting symbol of all that is darkest and most terrible in West African beliefs. As one's canoe slips down some creek, perchance

never before visited by a white man, between ill-smelling mud-flats, arched over and over by tangled, wan-coloured roots, the shadows seem a fitting background for dark stories of lust and blood, while the very air seems heavy with the agony of victims. Yet, so far as it has been possible to ascertain, the mangrove neither claims nor receives sacrifice ; while it goes on, year after year, in growth and decay, ceaselessly gathering round its roots atoms of alluvial soil washed thither by the waters, thus gradually building up the smiling lands behind its dark outposts. Often at a sudden turn in the creek one comes upon a little beach leading to hidden homestead and prosperous farm, where small brown piccans and gorgeous butterflies play in the sunshine, and gay-hued flowers and ripening corn are to be seen on every hand. So, too, amid this strange maze of superstition and cruel rites which form the religion of the people, one chances unawares upon gentle traits, or turns of thought, almost startling in their tenderness and beauty.

Girt round by swamp and marsh lie the fertile farm lands, yielding heavy crops of yam, cassava, and corn, in return for industrious cultivation, their open, sunny spaces alternating with stretches left to lie fallow, till, at the end of seven years—now, owing to the increasing population, more often reduced to three—these in turn are cleared by fire and furrowed by short-handled, primitive hoes in preparation for the new season's crops. Dry stems, left standing here and there, licked white by the flame, or showing patches of charcoal black, act as supports for the yam vines, which twist and climb round them, much like the hops of Kent or our own Worcestershire. Lower down, coco-yams spread out great arum-like leaves, while pumpkin flowers, bright hued or white, hang in graceful garlands or trail along the ground.

The wasteful method of farming, by which, save for sacred groves and comparatively rare stretches of forest, every few years' growth is destroyed, forms a somewhat serious problem from the point of view of deforestation. Fortunately the belts of palm-swamp and mangrove marsh, which everywhere fringe the encircling waters, make the question less acute than it would otherwise be ; for, no

matter how fiercely the bush fires rage, they come before long to an arm of creek or river stretched forth to bar their path.

With the exception of some forty Europeans and a few African strangers, the population is composed entirely of Ibibio, one of the most ancient peoples in this or perhaps any part of Africa, who have probably been in this neighbourhood for many thousands of years. This, however, is said with great diffidence, since our leading African authority, Sir Harry Johnston, in his *Survey of the Ethnography of Africa*, is of opinion that they only arrived in these regions about fifteen hundred years ago.

The Ibibio are confined to the south-eastern part of Nigeria, and number in all over a million, of which some hundred and fifty thousand inhabit the Eket District, divided into nine tribes,¹ of whom the Efik,² whose main habitat is in Calabar District to the east, are the best known.

Their language belongs to the Semi-Bantu group, with many and strong affinities, however, to the Sudanic tongue of their neighbours the Ibo, with whom they have much in common. The dialects spoken by the different tribes vary so much as to be almost unintelligible in towns only a few miles apart, but the spread of education and the adoption of the Efik speech in school and religious books have greatly simplified inter-tribal communication during the last few years.

The Ibibio are typical negroes, thick-set, with long arms, short trunks, medium-sized legs, and feet broad and flat, usually with larkspur heels. Their skulls are long and often "crested," *i.e.* sloping upwards at the back, which projects far over the neck. Their lips are in most cases thick and everted, the cheek-bones rarely prominent, the

¹ Viz. Oronn, numbering according to the 1921 census about 41,000 souls; Okkobbor (Okkobbaw), 11,000; Efik and Effiatt, 3000; Ubium, 9000; Nsitt (including Ndiya and Okkonn), 11,000; Ibeno, 4000; Ibibio (Awa), 39,000; and Eket, 20,000; giving a total population of 138,000, composed of adults—males 33,000, females 38,000; and non-adults (*i.e.* under fifteen years old)—males 34,000, females 33,000. The real population is probably very much higher.

² This is the conventional spelling. The word is really pronounced Efuk or Effuk, and applies more particularly to the Duke Town quarter of Calabar.

nose flat, with splayed nostrils, and the jaws prognathous. The colour of the eye is, almost without exception, deep brown, and of the skin varying shades of the same colour, generally very dark or chocolate, while the hair is short, black, and woolly.¹

The Ibibio form yet another survival from that strange, half-forgotten world for whose children life was one long wonder-tale. Many, it is true, have now been led by white influence to the borderland between the old and new. Indeed so rapidly is civilisation spreading, that the late Mr. Eakin, a missionary of great experience, told me that I had only come just in time to record the old faiths and customs before their final fading. Yet, though the young are so swiftly becoming Christianised, many of the older generation still cling to beliefs and ways unchanged, or hardly changed, since the childhood of the world.

For such the commonplace does not exist, each object is tinged with wonder and mystery, while forces beneficent or malignant are to be felt on every hand. To us, in the twentieth century, it is hard indeed to grasp the point of view of survivals such as these. Before their mental vision the path stretches broad and clear; familiar as that which leads to farm or homestead. To us it has been lost for centuries. Faint is now the trail and far the way, barred by the thorny tangles of alien thought and overgrown with the weeds of forgetfulness.

To the Ibibio, as to the Ekoi, everything, from the smallest stone or humblest plant to the mightiest rock, river, or tree, has an indwelling soul or "Mana," which is capable of projecting itself in a multitude of ways in order to influence the lives of those with whom it comes in contact. For instance, should an Ibibio man, on going forth in the morning, strike his foot against root or stone, or should a snake or other small creature cross his path, he usually goes back to seek an offering. "Perhaps," he thinks, "that which I saw was the manifestation of the Power set to guard me to-day. I will therefore offer sacrifice, that it may be favourably inclined and protect me from all ill."

¹ The physical characters of the Ibibio and other West African peoples are being treated in detail in a forthcoming book.

Beside such transient guardians, each of the more important towns and families has its own sacred grove, pool, creek, tree, or stone, which may be looked upon as the home of permanent protectors, the more famous of which have become places of pilgrimage, and will be described in turn. Certain similarities run through all or nearly all. Most, for instance, are connected with the worship of Obumo, the Thunder God, who to all, save a few initiates, is looked upon as the chief deity of the tribes of this District. In nearly all such groves a sacred stone is to be seen representing a goddess who confers fruitfulness upon her woman worshippers. In most cases this is the "outward, visible sign" of Eka Abassi (Mother of God), who, according to esoteric teaching, is the true head of the Ibibio Pantheon. Such waters are guarded, so the legend runs, by python and leopard. A mat woven of plaited grass or palm-leaf is often to be found stretched across the entrance, and, in nearly all cases, jars of varying shape and form, skulls—either of human beings or animals—and the feathers of white birds are to be seen. Sacred fish, tenanted by the souls of men, swim in the waters, while above soar fish eagles, black and white, the totem or "affinity" of many chiefs of the race.

These seemingly disconnected objects are all parts of a complicated symbolism. Obumo,¹ the Thunderer, is not only regarded by most present-day Ibibio as the principal deity, but as the great First Cause—the All-Father—from whom everything which exists has sprung. His home is in the sky, and, as he is too far off to trouble much about the smaller concerns of men, he leaves these in the hands of lesser powers; reserving to himself the ordering of the great events of the year, such as the division of the seasons.

The "dry" months are looked upon as the time of barrenness and unrequited desire. If an Ibibio man wishes to express dislike of a woman, he nearly always uses the word "dry" as a term of disparagement towards her. In due course, the first rains begin to fall, slaking the thirst of the parched earth. Soft mists enfold her, and from their gentle embrace her barrenness turns into fruition. A

¹ See also p. 255.

stirring and quickening, hardly perceptible at first, but growing ever stronger, makes itself felt. Seeds germinate and spring forth to new life. Young leaves spread over all their veil of fresher, tenderer green ; while yams, plantains, and new corn swell and ripen to nourish the children of men.

As so often happens amid primitive peoples when, after months or years of careful study, one fondly dreams that the bed-rock of religious ideas has at length been reached, a chance word, or vague hint, shows that, beyond all yet learnt, lies a deeper depth still. So here. For months nothing happened to lead us to doubt the reiterated assertion, made by all classes and on every hand, that Obumo, the Thunderer, was not only the Chief of the Ibibio Pantheon, but the great First Cause from which all things have sprung. This belief fitted in so neatly with those of other West African peoples, chronicled by authors of far greater weight, that we accepted it unquestioningly. Only after long study did we chance upon the fact that another belief had been handed down, though this was kept, a carefully guarded secret, from the knowledge of all, save those few initiated into the esoteric mysteries, a band, always small in number, but now verging on extinction.

One evening when seeking information as to the existence of sacrificial altars, from a man of Chief Henshaw's household well known for his knowledge of secret things, forgotten by or hidden from the common herd, he happened to mention that the only case in which, to his knowledge, altars were erected, was on the occasion of sacrifices made to Eka Abassi (Mother of God). Acting on this hint, careful inquiries brought out an ancient belief that the latter was the Divine Creatrix—like Ilmatar of the *Kalevala*—from whom Obumo the Thunderer sprang, a virgin birth, as did Vainamoinen of the Finnish legend. Indeed, so like are these two far-sundered Creation stories that many of the beautiful lines of the northern version poured, to our astonishment, hardly changed save for names, from the lips of these rude Ibibio :

I have often heard related,
And have heard the song recited,

How the nights closed ever lonely,
 And the days were shining lonely.
 Only born was Vainamoinen,

Sprung from the divine Creatrix,
 Born of Ilmatar, his mother,
 Air's young daughter was a virgin,
 Fairest daughter of Creation.
 Long did she abide a virgin,
 All the long days of her girlhood,
 In the Air's own spacious mansions,
 In those far-extending regions.

From Obumo, son and spouse of the one Great Mother, sprang, according to Ibibio belief, the parents of all earth-folk, and, lest in course of the ages these latter should forget their divine origin, sacred pools and groves were set apart by the Thunderer himself, as shrines to which all in need might flee; there to claim the special protection of the dread deities.

In a deeply interesting article entitled "A Common Basis of Religion," contributed to the *Journal of the African Society*, April 1913, Mr. R. E. Dennet says:

"In each sacred grove that has been examined by me I have found:

"0.

"1. Mats said to represent the rainbows.

"2. Pots of water.

"3. Seeds and parts of trees.

"4. Oysters and other shells. (Oyster represents determination.)

"5. A hut and snake skins. (The hut represents feeling, sensation, love; snake skins awe and secrecy, and the two great divisions of the seasons.)

"6. The vertebra of the whale and feathers of parrots. (The whalebone and feathers of birds symbolise motion.)

"7. The heads of brutes and animals. (Animals and man intelligence.)

"8. The priest and worshippers."

Now in Ibibio sacred groves, over a score of which we

were the first Europeans permitted to visit, we usually found :

1. Mats of plaited palm leaf, said to represent the rainbow, and, when fringed, rainbow and lightning combined ; thus typifying the seasons of the year : the dry weather, or rain ceasing, and the tornado or rainy time.
2. Pots of water, *i.e.* ghost offerings, representing the Spirit World in general, and the ancestors in particular.
3. Seeds and parts of trees, signifying the power of procreation and the forces latent in vegetation. Sometimes, too, there is a sacred tree, of giant size, the spirit of which is looked upon as a powerful protector.
4. Shells, *Voluta* and *Fasciolaria* (species not yet determined by scientists). These are sacred to the Spirit of the Sea, "since one can always hear the sound of her waves in them." For the same reason all sea-shells are sacred in varying degree and some fresh-water ones, because these latter belong to the spirits of streams and rivers.
5. A little hut, representing the family, hearth, and home.
6. Parts of fishes, skulls, and vertebrae of crocodiles, feathers of white birds and skulls and horns of bush beasts—signifying life and movement in water, air, and on earth.
7. Holy stones or rocks, in conjunction with pool, lake, or earth itself—all typifying motherhood or fertility.
8. A legendary python set to guard the waters, a leopard appointed to the same office by land, and a fish eagle hovering as protector in the clear air above.

All of these last-named creatures are mysteriously linked with human beings, as will be seen in the chapter dealing with animal affinities, totems, and were-beasts.

Lastly, in many of these sacred groves, as in most places of sacrifice, egg-shells may be found, often impaled upon sticks.

The following facts were gleaned by my wife, during the course of her independent investigations from women informants :



IN AN IBIBIO SACRED GROVE.

“ Long ago,” one of these stated, “ Obumo, the Thunderer, left the earth and ascended to the sky.” Here the narrator waved her arms with wing-like motion to illustrate the flight of the Deity. “ From his home in the clouds Obumo still sends forth his messengers, Rain and Storm-wind, Thunder-bolt and *Eagle*.”

In the latter form, according to Ibibio belief, as once on the mountain Kokkygion near Sparta, the god is still thought to descend at the beginning of the rainy season to woo his terrestrial consort.

At Ndiya town, a place of some importance on the Kwa Ibo River, neither eggs nor fowls may be eaten, and, should this command be broken, sudden death would fall upon the offender through the agency of the great local Juju Isu Ndemm (the Face of the Juju). On the authority of one of my wife’s woman informants the following reason was given for this tabu :

“ My grandmother once told me,” said the old woman,¹ “ that Isu Ndemm was the mouthpiece of Eka Abassi. So great is this goddess that no husband was needed for the birth of her babes. By her own might alone did the first of these, Obumo, spring forth ; but to none of her daughters was this power transmitted. When, therefore, the Great Mother saw that all the first earth-women were sterile, long she pondered ; then sent to them a white bird, which, floating down through the Realm of the Wind to earth, laid a gleaming egg—the symbol of fertility.”²

Surely in this Ibibio belief lies the germ of the beautiful lines

Ἐρέβους δ’ ἐν ἀπείροσι κόλποις
τίκτει πρῶτιστον ὑπηνέμιον Νύξ ἡ μελανόπτερος ῥόν.³

In the beginnings of things, black-winged Night
Into the bosom of Erebus, dark and deep
Laid an egg, wind begotten . . .

These lines are quoted by Miss Harrison, to whom

¹ The “ pidgin ” English has, in all cases, been turned into ordinary English.

² D. Amaury Talbot, *Woman’s Mysteries of a Primitive People* (Cassell).

³ Aristophanes, *Aves*, 692.

students of Hellenism owe so deep a debt, in an illuminating paper on Bird and Pillar Worship. She continues :

" The beautiful doctrine of the Fatherhood of the wind and the Virgin Birth was Orphic, and is connected with the ancient Attic Cult of the Wind Gods, the Tritopatores, worshipped by Bride and Bridegroom before marriage. The World-egg, looking back to the divine Bird, is Orphic. Orpheus said : ' What time great Chronos fashioned in holy Aether a silver-gleaming egg.' " ¹

In the *Kalevala*, the Cosmic egg was laid upon the knee of the Great Mother herself, from which it rolled into the water, where " a wondrous change came o'er " it, " and the fragments all grew lovely."

From the cracked egg's lower fragment,
Now the solid earth was fashioned,
From the cracked egg's upper fragment,
Rose the lofty arch of Heaven.²

Miss Harrison thus ends her deeply interesting paper :

" The Orphics, we have long known, revived, among other primitive things, the Cult of Gaia, the Earth Mother. They revived also, we have seen, the egg Cosmogony. . . . On the gold tablet of Petelia the initiated Orphic in Hades will drink of the Water of Memory. The guardians challenge him. They ask him whence and from whom he comes. He claims no kinship with any Olympian ; he looks back to an earlier Faith and an august parentage ; ' I am the child of Earth and of Starry Heaven.' "

To continue the *Ibibio* story as related to my wife :

" Old women tell that, after showing the people how, by honouring eggs and oval stones, and making sacrifice to the Great Mother, the gift of fertility might be won, the magic bird flew back to her home in the sky ; whence, with folded wings, soft brooding, she still watches over the children of men. Mortals call her ' Moon,' and sometimes, when people are sleeping, the Moon-bird floats down from her home on high and pecks up grains, or other food, which she may find lying about. She looks round to see that all

¹ *Transactions of the Third International Congress of the History of Religions*, vol. ii. p. 163.

² *Kalevala*, Rune 1, line 231 *et seq.*

is well with the Earth-folk, and that the tabu on fowls and eggs is still observed. Were it otherwise, the hens would complain to her, and she would bear their plaint before Eka Abassi, who would not only kill the actual offenders, but withdraw her gift: thus sending barrenness upon all the countryside. It is because of this service that the goddess forbids the offering to her of any fowl save such as has borne many eggs in its day but, by reason of age, has ceased from bearing."

Some traces still exist of a belief in an earlier god called Ete Abassi (Father God), the husband of Eka Abassi. At the present day, however, he has been superseded by Abassi Obumo, as was the Greek Chronos by Zeus, the Yoruba Shango by Awlawrun, and the Ibo Chuku Abiama by Chineke, or has even become identified with him, as has Eka Abassi in some places with Isong, the earth.

In Eket District Abassi is generally represented by a small clay pot, filled with water in which is placed a manilla, and sometimes an egg, while a palm leaf is stretched across. Among other Ibibio an Itommaw, Awkonnor, or Obbossi tree, or the sacred Ngwewepp leaves are usually planted near by.

The symbol of Isong is, in some places, a round clay pot, filled with water or palm wine and placed between two Akwa sticks amid a heap of small round stones; in others the goddess is represented by the shell of a tortoise, the emblem of the female sex, impaled before the shrine of Abassi. Among Northern Ibibio a "stick" of fish is added.

The symbols of both deities are often rubbed round with yellow wood dye. Sacrifices of a cock to Abassi and a hen to Isong are generally made simultaneously, about the time of planting new farms and the harvest festival, also at any time by an expectant mother or the parents of a sick child. Some Ibibio sacrifice to these divinities at the cross-roads or before the big ant-hills, the head of the fowl being put down one of the passages in the mound. The Efik often offered up their sacrifices in a pit whence clay had been dug for building purposes; generally an old woman officiated as priestess.¹

¹ See also p. 181.

The fact that among Ibibio the fish eagle is thought to hover over grove or water sacred to Obumo the Thunderer, brought to mind memories of similar beliefs enshrined in many a half-forgotten line. Gliding through creeks, bird-haunted, where egrets flit before one, white against the blue, and rose-tinted flamingoes people the sandy beaches or drift across the green of distant banks, light wafted like pale petals from some giant rose, many a verse comes to mind which, in such surroundings, takes on new and deeper meaning. How much might be learnt could one but study Euripides, Aeschylus, or Aristophanes amid such ideal scenes! But light travelling is one of the first necessities for carrying out official work in a District such as this. Carriers are an all-important item of expenditure, and, in default of books, one has to rely on chance lines garnered in memory's storehouse, such as the beautiful

*ἡλιβάτοις ἐνὶ κενθμῶσι γενοίμαν
ἵνα με πτεροῦσσαν ὄρνιν ἀγέλησιν
ποταναῖς θεὸς ἐνθείη,¹*

with its hardly less beautiful rendering by Professor Gilbert Murray :

Could I take me to some cavern for my hiding,
On the hill-tops where the sun scarce hath trod ;
Or a cloud make the home of mine abiding
As a bird among the Bird-Droves of God.

Here, again, Miss Harrison's article expresses much of what I would say, far better than I could hope to do. It is therefore unnecessary to apologise for quoting those passages which bear most closely on the conjunction of grove or water, sacred to the Thunder God, Eagle, and Earth Mother, so clearly do they voice reflections borne in upon our minds amid the silences of this strange water-world.

"Thunder, Thunderbolt, and Lightning are not distinguished, and, further, they are not for death and destruction only. Like the sun, they are parts of the Heavenly fire, the Aether, only caught and imprisoned in a black thunder-cloud. As Euripides has it : It is in his Epiphany of Thunder and Lightning that Keraunos comes to

¹ Euripides, *Hipp.* 732.

Keraunia, that the Sky God weds Semele, the Earth, the 'Bride of the Bladed Thunder.' "

" On a votive relief in the Sparta Museum we see Apollo and Artemis in human form. Beneath them are the older divinities of Earth and Sky, the Omphalos and the Eagles. The Omphalos is not, I think, the stump of a tree, . . . it is simply what the name says, the navel of the Earth Goddess, the Mother thought of Anthropomorphically."

Here, amid the primitive Ibibio, we have the actual Omphalos; for in nearly every case the stone standing out from earth or encircling water bears almost the exact shape of its representation on the old papyrus of Am-Tuat.¹

Distinct traces of the Cult of the Eagle are still said to be found at, and near, Ebughu, one of the largest and most important towns in the district. Here, when the eagles are heard to cry in the bush, the inhabitants are reported to gather at a certain tree, round which they dance for hours, in honour of the lordly birds.

The custom was brought to our notice through a matrimonial quarrel, resulting from one such celebration. My informant was Obuoho, son of the Head Chief of Oduku. He related the circumstances to show the folly and ignorance of the Ebughu people :

" On one occasion, when a husband and wife had been dancing for some time round the Sacred Tree," he told us, " the man said to the woman, ' I am tired and hungry and shall now go home.' The wife, however, answered, ' You can go if you wish, but I have not yet danced long enough, so will come later.'

" The man went alone, but after a while a friend joined him, and to the latter he said, ' Since my wife did not come at my bidding, I cannot let her return to my house any more; but shall put her away.' To which the friend answered: ' How can you do so? The woman did but follow the ancient rite which our fathers have taught us, in obedience to the cry of the Eagles. You should therefore allow her to come back to you when the dancing is over.' "

We had made arrangements to revisit the town, so soon

¹ Budge, *Egyptian Heaven and Hell*, vol. i. p. 102.

as other duties allowed, in order to follow up investigations in this direction, when orders came to proceed to another District. So, to our great regret, further information on the subject was not obtainable. Unless we are much mistaken, however, other traces of bird-worship may be found in the "bird-play," described on p. 79, and the "long-tailed" dance of the Egbo Society (p. 163), for each of which a feathered head-dress is worn, as also in the fact that, as in ancient Egypt, the Cult of the Vulture plays a prominent part in the life of the people. This may be specially noticed in the initiatory ceremonies of the great Idiong Secret Society (p. 173).

Another possible echo from an ancient bird cult may perhaps be traced in the Inuen Okobo (Bird Juju), which is regarded as very powerful for finding out hidden things, such as the causes of sickness, etc. It is supposed to have received its name "because the Spirit talks with a small, small voice like a bird." According to some accounts, in olden days the priest of this cult was also stated to have donned a bird head-dress before giving out the oracles.

It is a very old Juju, the "custom" of which is said to be as follows. The priest places two small, flat beans, each pierced with a hole, in his nostrils, while he holds a larger one in his mouth. He then takes two old ramrods and binds them together, fastening a ram's beard at the top, after which he pours "medicine" over all. To pronounce his oracles he sits in the Juju shed, before a curtain of plaited palm leaf, which is hung across so as to hide an inner compartment.

Another very ancient cult, that of the serpent, still holds sway along the whole Nigerian and Dahomeyan coast, while among the Yoruba this is looked upon as the symbol of awe and mystery. Ibibio would seem to regard it more as the guardian of sacred places and mysterious cults than in itself symbolical.

In connection with the tutelary pythons reported to be found in nearly all Ibibio sacred grooves or pools, it is not without interest to remember that the Throne of Osiris was guarded by a giant serpent. In a papyrus of the XXII. Dynasty the Deity is represented "lying on the slope of

a mound of earth, with his right arm extended on the top of it. His hand nearly touches the head of a huge serpent, the body of which passes down the back of the heap.”¹

Further, these pythons appear as the special guardians of holy places dedicated to the powers of fertility. Among many primitive peoples, such, for instance, as the Pangwe, there is considerable evidence to show that the snake is regarded as the representation of the phallus, and, as such, plays an important role in initiatory ceremonies of youths of the tribe.²

Each great Ibibio Juju man is supposed to keep one such serpent familiar in his house, in the “bush” where secret rites are celebrated, or in some place by the waterside. It is called Kukubarakpa, and, by virtue of this agent, much of the magician’s power is said to come to him. The possession of such a snake is also supposed to bring riches, though its magic is thought to be of no avail during the season of storms.

To Abassi Obumo, the Thunderer, human sacrifices were always offered at the time of the New Yam Festival. A very tall tree was chosen for the purpose. Bark, stripped from piassava palms, was wrapped round the victim so as to envelop him completely, and he was then tied, bundle-wise, to the trunk, some distance from the ground. Chief Henshaw discovered one such sacrifice a few years ago, and at Atebio—a town of some importance in the centre of the District—several trees are to be seen which, in olden days, were set apart for thus bearing the thunder god’s offering.

There is a road called Usun Obuma, *i.e.* the Road of the Storms, which lies near here, on the border of the Oban District. Over this the winds are said to blow ceaselessly, and “Thunder Stones” are stated to fall more often than in other places. When such a stone is seen to strike the earth, people mark the spot, but do not at once try to dig up the meteorite, because, should one attempt to do so, it is said to cry out with a voice like that of a man in pain. A chicken is therefore first killed and the blood poured upon the stone, for the same reason as that given by the

¹ Dr. Wallis Budge, *Osiris and the Egyptian Resurrection*, p. 43.

² Gunter Tessmann, *Die Pangwe*.

Yoruba for a libation of oil under similar circumstances. Among Ibibio a palm leaf is also cut and laid over the hole ; for here, as with the Ekoi, palm trees are thought to bear some mysterious link with the thunder Juju.¹

All Idiong men possess these "Storm Stones," which they lay before them when divining, while the priest of Obumo and some other Juju men have a strong "medicine," by which they can cause an enemy's house to be struck by lightning, or send a tornado to ruin the farms of those against whom they cherish ill-will.²

Once, when Consul Annesley was at Calabar, a chief got into trouble with Government because he had cut off the ears of several of his "boys" and flogged some women dependents naked round the town. In his house were many "fine gifts" obtained from Spanish traders, among them two cannon which were confiscated by Government, one of which still serves to give time to all the neighbourhood by being fired at eight o'clock every morning. It is said that the delinquent's family got a "bad mind" against Consul Annesley, to whom they attributed the punishment of their chief. So they collected money to buy the "Storm Juju," by which means they raised a terrible hurricane, hoping to destroy the offending official by thunderbolt or lightning stroke.

In general, however, Obumo is opposed to witchcraft and all bad Jujus. It is fatal to attempt to carry out evil spells during the time of storms, when his power is greatest. In this connection it may be noted that the sonorous lines of the old Babylonian poem might equally well be chanted by Ibibio of to-day :

Place him where the thunder roar is uttered, that it may help thee,
May the potent meteorite of heaven
With its awful roar help thee,
That the evil Spirit and the evil Demon may go forth,
That the evil Ghost and the evil Devil may go forth,
That the evil God and the evil Fiend may go forth.³

¹ As also among the Ibo.

² Ibo "doctors" use them to produce rain. Among the Yoruba they are neolithic celts, one of which must be in every important shrine of Shango, the God of Thunder.

³ R. C. Thompson, *The Devils and Evil Spirits of Babylonia*, p. 121, line 30 *et seq.*

In some parts of the District a curious means is taken to prevent young children from fearing thunder and lightning. Electric fishes are caught and placed in a bowl of water during a storm. After being left in this for some time, the water is poured off into another vessel and given to the child to drink. This is done with the idea that children thus treated will lose all fear of tempests, and that those who do not dread him enjoy the special protection of the thunder god, and, by his aid, will attain to power and riches.

CHAPTER II

JUJUS

CONTRARY to general opinion, the religion of the West African negro does not seem to me to be animism in the sense that all the forces of nature are personified and the universe is a congeries of uncorrelated and independent entities. To him the world is a vast organisation and all phenomena are set in motion, and controlled, by hierarchies of beings, ranging in power and responsibility from the highest conceivable God down to the lowest rock elemental, each in strict subordination to its superior.

Those nature spirits, with whom the *Ibibio* are brought into contact, are called by them *Ndemm*,¹ and dwell in or near rivers, pools, and springs, in trees, rocks, and sacred stones—fairies, gnomes, salamanders, naiads, dryads, etc. They are male and female, their bodies built somewhat on the human model, but of more ethereal texture, varying in height from about six inches to four feet. Each race has its own particular work; they are principally concerned with the growth of vegetation, while some—especially the *Anandum* among the *Anang*, like the *Animm* of the *Ekoi*—are regarded as the givers of babes and all young things, since it is they who, under the guidance of *Eka Abassi*, at conception place the body of the child in the mother's womb and superintend its development.

As a rule, however, *Jujus* mix little with mankind, though, in answer to prayers and sacrifices, some constitute themselves guardians over particular towns or families—especially the earth spirits, who are thought to be about

¹ The term appears to be derived from the word meaning fresh water.

thirty inches in height, and to have their feet turned backward. The most powerful of all Ndemmm live in the water, where they sometimes assume the form of crocodiles, though the kind called 'Mbiam are perhaps the most feared since they are quick to bring down vengeance on all who have falsely invoked their name. By some the latter are accounted to be an entirely different tribe.

The Ndemmm are quite distinct from Ibokk, which is sometimes translated by "Juju" as well as by "medicine"—the latter not to be confounded with ordinary herbal decoctions. The Ibokk are natural or elemental forces which do not affect, or come into contact with, human beings—or in some cases do not even exist—until "made" by a native doctor or some other wise man. They are formed by the mixture of certain leaves and roots, sometimes with the addition of ingredients, such as, for instance, where a powerful entity is required, it has been said, by the pounded-up body of a child. An incantation is chanted over the mixture, and certain sacrifices, generally of blood, offered up before it. The forces thus produced are not immortal like the Ndemmm, but will fade away after the owner's death if the proper rites are not continued. If it is desired to destroy the power of an Ibokk, the best way is to keep on breaking its laws—for example, that no one must pass before it in the daytime, etc. If a "medicine," however, is neglected by its owner, it will send sickness or accident to him. Sacrifices, generally of a goat or fowl, are offered at least once a year, usually at harvest time.

Ibokk are, for the most part, made for defensive purposes, for protection against ill-wishers or evil messengers, but are sometimes procured from "doctors" to harm an enemy.

Most Ibibio, like the majority of peoples hereabouts, have a firm belief in the justice of the government of the world. Ordinarily no evil spirit or person is deemed to have the power of harming an innocent man. Those who suffer misfortunes or ill-treatment are thought to have deserved them in some way or at some time; and therefore evil entities are allowed up to a certain point to wreak their will, though, in the instance of a child born lame or blind,

the wrong deed now punished may have been committed in a previous incarnation.

According to the late Chief Daniel Henshaw :

“ Ndemm is uncreated, eternal, dwelling in springs, pools, or rivers, within the boles of great trees, in rocks, and places where our ancestors have offered sacrifices for centuries beyond centuries : where tall many-sided stones stand, or copper rods are to be seen pushing forth from the earth. Such spots are to be found in the depths of the bush, and are very holy on account of the indwelling spirit. Ndemm cannot be materialised, and very rarely is an attempt ever made to represent him.¹ Mats of plaited palm leaf are often hung round his dwelling-place, but only as an intimation that the ground is holy. He is the giver of fertility, one of the beneficent forces of nature.”

From Ndemm it is that fruit and grain are sent to nourish the children of men ; but Adonis-Attis-Osiris-like, he demands terrible sacrifices at certain seasons of the year : such for instance as the planting of new yams and the feast of the first-fruits. There is, however, this great difference between the victims of most Ndemm and those of 'Mbiam. The former demand offerings, not from motives of vengeance, but purely as fecundative agents. 'Mbiam, on the contrary, represents the Ahriman of Zoroaster—the forces of terror and dread. By his aid vengeance, swift and sure, may be wrought upon an enemy. He is a terrible avenger of broken vows sworn upon his name, or of wrong done to any for whom his help has been invoked. 'Mbiam is the personification of hatred and revenge—“ the spirit which denies ” ; but of which it is impossible to say with Mephistopheles :

Ein Theil von dieser Macht,
Welch stets das Böse will, und stets das Gute schafft—

for to him has been given not only the will, but also, alas ! the power to do evil. With this dread cult it will, however, be necessary to deal in a separate chapter.

Of the Ndemm of this region the most celebrated is, without doubt, the so-called “ Lake of Life ” at Ikotobo—

¹ Here spoken of as of the masculine gender for the sake of convenience.

the holy pool in which dwells the spirit of the Great Mother Abassi Isu Ma (Goddess of the Face of Love).

A chance mention of the "Lake of the Dead," discovered by me a few years ago in the Oban District, brought to light the existence of a mysterious sheet of water in the neighbourhood of Ikotobo, a rumour of which had already reached the ears of Mr. Eakin. Its whereabouts had hitherto been kept, a jealously-guarded secret, from the knowledge of Europeans; while, with the exception of the reigning high priest, even the natives themselves are not allowed to penetrate beyond the Place of Sacrifice, which lies some distance below the sanctuary. This stretch of water is the "Pool of Life," and on its safeguarding depends the very existence of the Ubium and Nsitt Ibibio—about 30,000 people in all. It is but another proof of the extraordinary tact of Mr. Eakin, and the influence which he has acquired over the natives, that he was able to persuade a guide to lead us to what is, in their opinion, the holiest spot on earth.

One afternoon, early in January, we set out, and for a considerable distance kept along a path already known to us. At first this was broad and easy to follow; but soon narrowed, and led, through scattered compounds, past a little forge where spear-heads are still beaten out. Later, turning sharply behind a high fence of plaited reeds, the way suddenly degenerated into a track so narrow that it was impossible, in places, to plant the feet side by side after the manner of Europeans, and we were forced to set them carefully, one before the other, in a deep rut, worn in the course of years by bare brown feet.

On and on we went. The "bush" grew wilder, while the track became so faint as almost to disappear. So jealously indeed is the secret hidden, that a stranger might pass within a few yards of the sacred water, yet never suspect its existence. Suddenly the path took a downward bend and led, through mud several inches deep, to the edge of a shallow pool, in the midst of which, raised on a little mound, a palm tree straight and splendid spread its crown of leaves between us and the vivid blue of the sky.

However used one may be to the sight of these trees,

called by Linnaeus the princes of the vegetable kingdom, the beauty of each upon which one happens unexpectedly, seems to gather a new significance. Involuntarily one finds oneself repeating over and over again Odysseus' beautiful comparison of Nausicaa—

Δήλω δὴ ποτε τοῖον Ἀπόλλωνος παρὰ βωμῷ
φοίνικος νέον ἔρνος ἀνερχόμενον ἐνόησα·

Once in Delos, such an one I saw : a young sapling of a palm, springing straight by the altar of Apollo.

The charm of the spot was undeniable, yet a slight chill fell upon us at the sight ; for we had been expecting something vast and mysterious, or at least capable of impressing us with its uncanny atmosphere, and the sunny, everyday aspect of the quiet pool was distinctly disappointing.

After a few minutes' hesitation, however, our guide waded across the water, and held back some boughs of the hedge-like "bush" which encircled it. Beneath these he disappeared saying that he would make a path for us, and after awhile we heard him calling. Retracing our steps a little, we turned into the bush on the right-hand side, and soon started climbing down a deep narrow gorge, at the bottom of which flowed a small stream, which we followed to another rivulet hardly more impressive. After crossing this, we found ourselves on a point of land looking down steep banks on to a narrow channel. Opposite the place where we stood rose a high slope covered by thick undergrowth, between the roots of which multitudes of pots of varying size were to be seen. A low post, round which white feathers were fastened crown-wise, was driven deep into the mud at the brink, and beneath lay small frames such as those which are used for carrying smoked fish to market.

This spot is the farthest limit to which ordinary mortals may attain. Only the head priest is allowed to go farther in order to carry special offerings into the "Holy of Holies." We followed upstream, and at length arrived at the sacred pool itself, a spot unsurpassed in fascination by the many interesting places to which good fortune had hitherto led our feet. That it was not one-tenth the size we had pictured

made no difference to the glamour of the scene. Indeed, its very smallness seemed but to add to its strangeness and mystery. It lay as if at the bottom of a well; for on all sides high banks towered above us, save for the narrow neck by which we had entered.

The sides were so steep as to offer no foothold, but from one of them jutted the gnarled elbow of a great branch, and to this point of vantage my wife and her sister were safely hoisted. Over them a Napoleona, allied to the "Gascoignei" discovered on our last tour, shed its sweet-scented blossoms.

The water was very deep and covered in parts by innumerable water-lily leaves, which formed a mosaic of vivid green, deep copper, or dull red, on the surface and at varying depths below. Here and there showed a milk-white flower with heart of gold, while between the long stems swam hundreds of sacred fish, so secure in their reputation for sanctity that they eat fearlessly from the hands of the priest. In olden days, should a man have been convicted of attempting to harm one of these, he was led down to the place of sacrifice and beheaded, that his blood might flow into the sacred water and make atonement for the sacrilege.

In the deep places of the pool dwell deadly water-snakes; while its grim guardians, a leopard and python, are said to lower ceaselessly, ready to destroy any one rash enough to seek to penetrate its mysteries. Most strange of all, the side exactly facing the entrance was sheer rock, and this in a land of alluvial soil, where, save in a few stream-beds, scarce a pebble is to be found. Low down on the face of the stone, beneath its veil of moss, and about a foot above the surface of the water, looms a circular hole, partially filled by offerings laid there by the chief priest. The rock is the earthly manifestation of Isu Ma, "The Face of Love," or—since by a beautiful turn of thought the words are identical in meaning—the Face of "The Mother," Eka Abbassi.

A strange superstition has grown up round this rock. To it, or rather to the place of sacrifice just below—for, as has already been mentioned, the spot itself is too sacred for the near approach of ordinary mortals—come wedded

couples to pray that babes may be born to them. Barrenness is looked upon as a sign that the bride was a disobedient daughter. When a maid refuses to obey her mother, the latter has the power to draw down punishment upon her. "You have been a bad daughter to me," she says, "therefore to you no child shall be born, that atonement may be made me for your undutiful behaviour."

When such a misfortune has befallen, the husband leads his wife to the place appointed, near the shores of the sacred pool. Here they tell their trouble to the priest, who advises them to bring a goat, fish, yams, and plantains as an offering to the goddess. When the gifts have been brought, they go down together to the place of sacrifice. From thence the woman wades upstream a little towards the entrance of the sacred pool, then makes obeisance and prays :

"O Abassi Ma ! keeper of souls ! What have I done to anger thee ? Look upon me, for from the time I left the 'fatting room' in my mother's house I have never conceived, and am a reproach before all women. Behold ! I bring gifts, and beg thee to have pity upon me and give me a child. Grant but this prayer, and all my life I will be thy servant."

The priest then takes a bowl never before used, dips it into the water, and pours some over the woman, who bends down so that face, arms, and body may be laved in the stream. When she rises again, the little party climb up the steep bank, to the place where the rest of the offerings lie. These are cooked, and eaten by all three, after which the suppliant returns home, strong in the hope that Abassi Isu Ma will take away her reproach.

Should the goddess grant a child which dies in infancy, the soft little curls are carefully clipt from its head and brought by the weeping mother to the place of sacrifice. Here they are laid upon the palms of the priest, who passes alone upstream, and, entering the sacred pool, deposits them within the hole in the stone, praying :

"Behold, O Isu Ma ! Thou hast granted a child whom thou also hast taken away. We bring thee the locks from his head that these may move thee to pity, and, in whatsoever realm his soul may wander, thou shouldst relent



POTS OF OFFERINGS AT PLACE OF SACRIFICE.



THE ROCK OF ABASSI ISU MA.
(Showing hole in rock in which offerings are laid.)

and send him back to the parents from whom thou hast taken him."

When a child is granted as a direct answer to such a prayer, custom ordains that he, or she, should be called "Ma."

The present "Oku," or high priest, an old man of venerable appearance, in whose family the office is hereditary, gave the following account of the sacred water :

"In the old, old days, long ago, Abassi Obumo, the Thunderer, greatest of all gods, called our fathers together and showed them the holy lake, saying : ' This place have I set to be the guardian of your children, of your fathers and mothers, and your strength for all time. It will be to you a great god. The god of Idiong, Isong, the Earth Goddess, the small things given you to worship which are seen in the houses of Idiong men—of all these Abassi Isu Ma is the greatest. She is the fount of fruitfulness, a tender mother, who will surely hear when ye call upon her name.'

"Abassi Obumo said further : ' I will put your souls in the keeping of the fish which dwell in the lake. These ye must neither kill nor eat, for they will be to you as the guardians of your town. I will also set apart a great serpent, who shall dwell by the shore, to be the keeper of the lake, and a leopard to dwell with him. Should trouble come upon your town or tribe, bring sacrifices to the Sacred Grove, and pray that the evil may be removed. Then Isu Ma will listen and hear, and save you from all ill.'

"Thus spoke Obumo the Thunderer, greatest of all gods, and from that time the lake has been worshipped by us, and also the fish that are within it, for we believe all that our fathers have handed down to us."

It is indicative of the supremacy of Isu Ma that, when a man wishes to join the Idiong Society—one of the chief secret cults of the District—he must first bring a fowl to the priest of the sacred water, and, in company with the latter, walk to the place of sacrifice, "For Abassi Isu Ma is great beyond the other gods, and only after prayer to her should lesser deities be invoked."

When the wife of an Idiong man first learns that she is about to become a mother, she is brought by her husband to the priest of his cult, who says :

"Abassi Isu Ma calls for your child. Go, take a fowl, yams and plantains. Make sacrifice to her, and your trouble will easily pass from you."

The couple then repair to the house of the priest of the pool, bearing a small bowl never before used, a cock, dried fish, yams and plantains. Together the three celebrants go to the place of sacrifice, where the priest offers up the following prayer :

"O Abassi Ma ! Greatest of all ! Look upon this woman and take away her trouble. Should you grant her a child, she will dedicate it to you, and it shall bear your name. Bless her, together with her husband and all his cattle, and make the child strong and well." He then takes the new bowl from the hands of the woman, dips it into the water and mixes clay therein, with which he smears the suppliant's face, arms and body. This rite is called "Mem."

In connection with the use of a "new vessel," it is not without significance that we learn from the Utukki Limnuti that, among ancient Babylonians, offerings might only be made in "a clean vessel of the gods."¹

After this the Oku (priest) takes the fowl, and, with a sharp matchet, cuts off its head, which he lets fall into the bowl. In like manner he strikes off the heads of the fishes and ends of the yams and plantains. Then he sets the bowl at the place of sacrifice among a multitude of others already there. The woman next holds up the remaining offerings in both hands, passing them round her head, and saying :

"O Abassi Ma ! Look favourably upon these gifts brought in your honour. Should you give me a child, he shall be yours also, and will come every year to bring you offerings."

After this the Oku goes, with husband and wife, to a place near the edge of the pool, where friends have already assembled. A fire is lighted, and the sacrificial gifts are cooked and eaten with much rejoicing.

Should the child sent in answer to this prayer grow up

¹ R. C. Thompson, *The Devils and Evil Spirits of Babylonia*, p. III, Tablet 16, line 298.

to be a thief, murderer, or indeed a bad character in any way, it is said that the goddess causes her waters to wash up the bowl brought by the parents, and casts it high on the farther bank as a sign of her displeasure against him.

Every year after the granting of such a prayer, at the beginning of the cutting of new farms, gifts must be brought by father, mother and child. The Oku bears these to the entrance of the pool and says:

“Abassi Isu Ma! Here comes your child with gifts. Draw near, therefore, and accept, for both mother and child have obeyed your voice.”

This ceremony is among those which seemed, to us at least, a refutation of the reproach cast by many, among them the Rev. R. H. Nassau, on the West African negro: “The reason for his appeal is simply fear; there is no confession, no love, rarely thanksgiving.”¹

After the sacrifices have been laid within the hole in the rock, the Oku takes strips of young palm leaf and binds them round the neck of the boy and his mother, to whom he also gives one such necklace for every child at home. Round the head of the father a circlet of the same material is bound. These ornaments are bestowed as a visible sign of blessing from the Great Mother.

We left the pool by another route, following the course of the stream for some distance, and, soon after again striking the path, met a youth, a girl and a small boy. These were “children of Ma,” going down to draw water from the place which we had first visited. On her head the girl bore one of the heavy earthen jars, to be bought for a few pence, and from the manner of the two elders it looked as if another couple might go, hand in hand, down to the place of sacrifice to beg a gift from Isu Ma at no very distant date.

Unfortunately the photographs taken on this first visit were not successful. Light and shade seem to have played strange tricks with the camera, and formed a group of figures which certainly had no origin in reality, yet which appeared to rise from the foreground of the sacred pool. So clear, indeed, were they, that, to the imaginative, they

¹ *Fetishism in West Africa*, p. 77.

might well pass for shadow-portraits of victims whose blood had dyed the waters in bygone days.

It was not till three months after our first visit that time could be found for a second, and, on the latter occasion, the son of the head priest acted as our guide.

Summer was now at its height, and the first pool had all but dried away, while the beautiful palm which once shaded it now stood shorn of its crown. The water, too, had fallen, till hardly more than a shimmer showed between fringing reeds and marsh-flowers, which had sprung into sudden life on the space thus left bare.

Where we had waded knee-deep upstream, we now walked almost dry-shod. Black mud surrounded the "Place of Sacrifice," and the sacred pool itself had shrunk till it lay as if a mere drop at the bottom of a deep goblet. Our followers gazed fearfully around, and one man whispered that none could now set foot in the water, since its denizens, which during the rains were free to roam over so much greater space, were now crowded together in the one small pool, and would certainly attack any man rash enough to venture among them.

This time we were determined to get good photographs of the "Face of Love," so the camera was set, over and over again, for a time exposure. Perhaps the spell of the place was not without its effect: at any rate no one had spoken for quite a long while, when suddenly, in the silence, a black cobra was seen to glide down the rock. It slipped soundlessly into the water and began to cross in our direction. A few minutes later a fish sprang above the surface, right into the tiny cave in the stone. I was bending over the camera, putting in a new film, and did not see it, but my two companions cried out to draw my attention. The sound of their voices startled the fish, which turned and sprang back into the water. It was one which, had such a thing not been forbidden, I would gladly have captured for Monsieur Boulenger of the Natural History Museum, for it was different from any we had as yet seen, coal black, with huge head and slender tail, in shape much like a giant tadpole.

CHAPTER III

JUJUS (*continued*)

NDEMM

AT Idua Asang, not far from Idua Oronn on the Cross River, stands the hut of the great Ndemmm Orutin Asang. Beneath the palm-leaf fringe, which curtains the entrance, lies an ivory tusk, stretching from post to post, but so ancient as to look like a curved branch with rough, silver-grey bark. Farther back, supported by a heap of skulls and bones, more tusks are to be seen, fantastically ornamented, some with fluted points and crocodiles in low relief, some carved into rough representations of men and women. One of these was so ancient as to show splits and cracks on its grey surface, exactly as though long ago hewn from a log, and left for sun and rain to work their will.

Before this Juju all children born to the town must be brought. In its honour, each first-born son receives the name of Atin, and every elder daughter is called Uta. A great ceremony is held, at which the priest shaves off the first hair from each small head, leaving only a little tuft at the back. Before doing this he must call seven times "Uta Atin," and only after the seventh call may the locks fall.

Another very powerful Juju in this town is named Etuk Ekenn. The chief function of this seems to be to save people from drowning. Should a canoe capsize in deep water, shouts are at once raised, "Etuk Ekenn! Etuk Ekenn! Save me! Save me!"

Many paddles lie on one side of the little hut, while skulls and stones, brought as offerings, are sheltered by planks made from the bottoms of old canoes.

Farther on, at Atabong, on a cleared space below the old Juju-house, the dwelling-place of the Ndemm Itiatt Esuk (Ndemm of the beach stones) may be found. It is by the power of this Juju that all children come to the town. Should the worshippers grow careless, or any of the inhabitants offend against its law, the spirit is angry and leaves them. When the priest announces such a calamity, loud cries are raised by the townsfolk. A canoe must be got ready at once, and lined with white cloth. Priests, chiefs, and paddlers, also robed in white, start at the next ebb-tide and row, sometimes to a creek in Parrot Island, whither the spirit is said occasionally to flee, sometimes as far as Effiatt, by the sea. After the performance of certain rites, the priest announces, apparently with great relief, that Itiatt Esuk has been induced to enter the canoe. Then, by full tide, they paddle back, singing, "We bring back Ndemm. Ndemm is here once more!" On the beach stand young men, wives, and maids, waiting to welcome home the wanderer. A great dance is given, during which the town is encircled, amid much rejoicing. The men sing, "Ndemm has come to make fruitful our wives," while women and maids answer, "Ndemm has come! The giver of babes!"

Once, during our stay in October 1913, such a flight occurred. Itiatt Esuk was said "to have left the town in search of her husband." After long seeking throughout her usual haunts, the "sign of her presence" was discovered at Esuk Oronn, about a dozen miles off, where the shrine of her spouse is said to be. This "sign" is explained as "a thing like a basin, made of lead, and called Usan Idan" (the bowl of the arrow). The name probably typifies the combined male and female attributes. When found it was reported to be full of egg-shaped stones—the symbols of fertility. The inhabitants of both Esuk Oronn and Atabong sacrificed to the two Jujus, after which Itiatt Esuk was borne in triumph to her own place.

In the small secret room, at the back of the little hut, stands a stone, which is the emblem of the Juju. This is, however, too sacred to be seen by any save those high in the ranks of the cult.

Before the great Juju-house of the town, now falling

into decay, several cut stones are still to be found standing upright in the ground, while others lie around where they have fallen. A little to the right another group of stones is to be seen; while a rough circle appears at one time to have surrounded the old Juju post which stands at the summit of the slope leading down to the beach.

To the south of this town, on the Mbo River, stands the shrine of a powerful Juju, the priestess of which is named Ebughudo. So far as we could learn, this is the only case of a woman acting as head of any of the great Juju cults of the District.

The country round Uda is also the home of many powerful Jujus, both Ndemm and 'Mbiam. In the midst of the town stands a Juju-house now falling into ruin, from which we purchased a drum of a type new to our collection. This was made in the shape of a canoe and intended for use as an accompaniment to paddlers' songs. In olden days, according to 'Ndemm 'Nyenn, one of the most powerful chiefs of the neighbourhood, this building was the resort of leopards, which used to come hither to lie in its shade.

The town is also the home of a great Juju called 'Nkpatan (white man's Juju). The origin of the name is difficult to trace, since it was brought thither at a time when no European had penetrated to this part of the country unless in old Portuguese days. It is, however, possible that some of the ingredients of the "medicine" were bought from white traders at Calabar. The Juju itself is said to dwell in the bush, by the water-side, at a place where a clear stream pours out into the creek. Here all the totem animals of the tribe are thought to live. Crocodiles, great fish and water-snakes, leopard and python haunt the spot. The people themselves fear to approach this sacred ground, and only the head priest of 'Nkpatan ventures thither, with offerings, at certain times of the year. This priest was said to have power over wild animals, and when he wanted food it is stated that "he had but to go to the Juju-house and lay his hand upon a sleeping leopard, stroking and patting its head and shining coat, just as an ordinary man might do with his dog. On such occasions he used to say, 'I am hungry. Bring food!' On this the leopard would

rise purring, then sally forth to collect small deer and other bush beasts, which it bore back and laid at the feet of the priest."

In the midst of the town, just outside the Juju-house, where the land begins to slope down to the creek-side, stands a tree of vast bulk—the great trunk girt round with a lattice-work of ficus, which is slowly crushing out the giant's life-blood by the ever-tightening grip of its clinging arms. About this tree a curious superstition has grown up. According to legend, the Juju "Ndidipp" dwells within. This has the power of dragging down and drowning in the creek below all those who offend against its laws. The people say that the rites of this Juju were attended in olden days by a strange manifestation.

"At certain times of the year the townsfolk used to come together to bring sacrifices to the genius of the tree. The offerings proper to the occasion consisted of a goat, fowls, yams, and plantains. These were cleaned and cut up beneath the branches, then placed in a very large calabash—the meat at the bottom and the vegetables laid above.

"When all had been arranged, the priest lifted the calabash to his head, and, followed by the people, went down to the beach. He entered the water and, while the rest sat watching, waded out till he reached a depth where it closed over head and calabash. The people waited, gazing at the spot where he had vanished, until in the space of about an hour he reappeared. On his head the calabash was still visible, but when borne to land its contents were found to have been made ready for eating, in the house of the Juju beneath the waters." All present feasted upon the meats thus miraculously cooked, which were said to have been more tender and delicate in flavour than those prepared on any earthly hearth.

The people say, sadly, that no such wonders are shown nowadays, because white rule has made an end to the laws of the old Jujus; such, for instance, as that all twins born in the town must be put to death. They say that since these are evil their presence must necessarily offend the Juju; and, as a sign of anger, he will no longer use his

power to work those pleasant miracles for worshippers who do not obey his law by destroying such "devil's spawn." They add pathetically that if only white men would allow them to go back to old custom and kill twins, Ndidipp would doubtless relent and all be as before !

Beneath the creek lies another great Ndemm—a rock, hidden at high tide but visible at low, "when the waters wash against it with a noise like that of a little waterfall. The name of this is Esit Obo Uda, and it is a very powerful Juju for altering the seasons. Should the rainfall prove too heavy, the people go before it and sacrifice a goat, praying, 'Let sun come out for me.' If, on the contrary, rain is needed for the crops, the spirit has but to be entreated again, and within a short time showers will fall."

Urua Eye, a little town some few miles higher up stream, is also a great Juju centre. The local 'Mbiam will be described separately, but the great Ndemm "Atakpo" also dwells here, in a grove like that of Abanga Ndak, near Oronn, from which no twig, or even single leaf, might be cut, save at certain seasons and by the priest of the cult. In olden days this was a place of refuge for slaves who wished to escape from their masters ; such refugees, however, became slaves of the Juju, and could only be ransomed by their former owners at a great price. If taken back into captivity the spirit was supposed to watch over them and inflict punishment were they ill-treated in any way.

As with several others in the District, the office of head priest of the Atakpo Juju was hereditary. Even should the "heir" not wish to enter the priesthood, he was forced to do so under pain of death. To such hereditary priests special reverence was due. For instance, in passing through the market-place they were free to take anything they wished from the stalls, and no man dreamed of asking for payment.

Like the Lake of the Dead in the Oban District, many Ibibio sacred pools and groves serve as a place of sanctuary, not for human beings alone, but also for wild things. Of such spots many stories are told, of which the following may be cited as typical :—

"There was once a hunter named Udaw Eka Ete. One

day he went to a Juju place and shot a monkey, after which he lay in wait for other prey, though none came. Just before sundown he set out for home, and, as he went through the sacred bush, heard a voice calling him by name and saying, 'Come back no more; for you have slain a beast that sought shelter in my sanctuary.' Astonished, the hunter tried to discover who spoke with him, yet for all his searching could find no one.

"That evening, fever seized the evil-doer; whereon he sent for the Idiong priest to learn the cause of the sickness. The latter consulted the oracle and made answer: 'To-day you killed a monkey in the sacred bush, and the Juju has sent the illness in punishment for your misdeeds, and as a warning never again to transgress.'

"When Udaw Eka Ete grew well once more, he avoided the forbidden place for a while, but one day returned and set a trap there. Next morning he went to look, and found a great python caught within. This he killed and ate, not caring for the words of the Juju.

"At evening time he fell sick once more and again sent for the Idiong man to ask what he must do in order to recover; but the priest answered: 'The Juju forbade you to kill any of the creatures who have sought refuge beneath his protection; yet you disobeyed. There is therefore nothing to be done. The Juju will kill you.' So the man died."

The most powerful of the Ibionnaw local tutelary spirits is a male Juju called Isiu, stated to be represented by an ant-heap, which appears regularly in the river near Itu on every Edere day. No man may see it but the priest—any other will die; but it is said to have a man's face and woman's breasts. Next to Isiu comes Anantia, who lives in a big cotton tree and, with the help of Eka Abassi, gives life and growth to crops, animals, and human beings.

At Eyudaw (Oronn) is a female spirit called Esuk Orraw, represented by an Akwa post in the town playground, in whose honour a festival is held once a year at new yam time. A great play is given, during which the parents of girls who have reached marriageable age offer eggs and phallic chalk cones to the Juju, praying her to prepare

babes ready for birth. Three months later the girls are handed over to their various husbands. A similar prayer is made on a like occasion by the Abiakpaw to a male spirit called Akai Odudu, represented by a clay pot, three Awkonnor trees, and an ant-heap in the form of a little man.

The tutelary spirit of Calabar—and the head of all the local Ndemmm under the paramountcy of Isong—is the Ndemmm Efuk, a male Juju, who lived on Parrot Island in the Cross River till the mangroves were cut, when he descended into the water. His principal duty is to send children, keep canoes from sinking, and help in trading ventures. He is represented by some large pots filled with water, a few Afia-Akuk rods, and a man's skull. At the two great festivals, the making of new farms and the feast of new yams, the sacrifices consisted of a cow and a goat, with the addition at the former of a yellow-skinned slave,¹ while a tortoise was added on special occasions, such as if, for instance, the Ndemmm Efuk sent an epidemic to punish the people for neglect or some other cause.

Close to the main road, just before Eket itself, there is a very celebrated Ndemmm pool which we are said to be the only Europeans to have visited. About two miles before the Government station the old road to Oronn branches off to the left. This leads, past farm plantations and a few scattered dwellings, into the sacred bush which surrounds the holy grove and pool of Edogho Ukwá.

In olden days no one was allowed to cut so much as a twig from any tree which grew hereabouts, since all were held in honour for the sake of the guardian spirit of the place. No twin-mother might pass along the path, nor approach the compound where the priest of the Juju dwelt, but was forced to skirt both by a little side track made for the purpose. Disobedience to this rule was punished by death.

Just before the sacred water the ground slopes steeply down, and on the ridge thus formed stands a great tree, in the hollow bole of which pots of offerings are placed. Nearby two posts have been fixed, and across these is stretched

¹ In many parts of Nigeria a person with a yellowish skin was much preferred as a sacrifice.

a mat of plaited palm-leaf. Beneath this a path leads to the water's edge, by which stands a rough rock altar, and upon this fresh offerings of plantain, fish, or fowl may nearly always be seen.

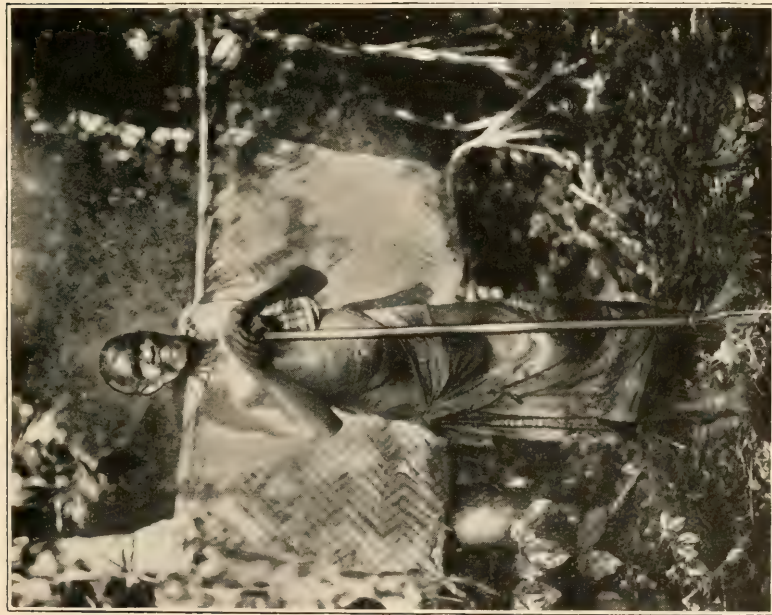
Curtailed from sight by thick trees, in that curiously clear translucent twilight of the under-bush only to be found in such places, about the middle of the pool, stand three great stones which bear the name of "Ufere," and are the outward visible sign of the guardian spirit of the place.

At the time of new yam planting, people come from far and near to beg protection and increase for their crops and herds. On such occasions the brow of the chief priest is bound with a fillet of white cloth, which may not be taken off till the time of sacrifice comes round again. He marks all the people with white chalk, as a sign that they have attended the festival and asked the blessing of the genius of the pool.

When a woman of the neighbourhood feels that the time for motherhood is drawing near, she tells her husband of her hopes. At once he sets out to gather yams, plantains and palm-wine to take as an offering to the priest. All three go down to the great tree at the entrance to the sacred water. The subsequent rites are almost identical with those practised at the "Pool of Life" at Ikotobo, while here again the woman swears that, should a child be granted her, it shall be given the name Edogho, in honour of the presiding deity. The old priest bears a part of the offerings to the rough altar on the shore; then returns, mixes water and native chalk into a thick paste, and with this marks the woman on forehead and body as a sign that she has been before Edogho Ukwá.

When a child dies in infancy, the mother goes again to the priest to ask him to lay her trouble before the spirit of the pool. Once more an offering is placed upon the altar, with the prayer that future children may be protected from death.

The present head-chief of Eket, Edogho Eket, is a so-called "Child of the Grove," and bears his name because he was supposed to be granted in answer to prayer made before the shrine of the guardian spirit.



THE PRIEST OF THE SACRED WATER OF EDOCHO UKWA.



ENTRANCE TO THE SACRED WATER OF EDOCHO UKWA.
(Note the mat, behind which none but the priest may go.)



According to the testimony of some, Edogho Ukwá is looked upon as possessing female, of others male attributes. In all probability the two are combined.

In another "sacred bush" on the farther side of the town stands a little hut, dedicated to the same spirit or spirits. At the time of new yam planting this building is gaily painted and hung with strips of cloth, white or bright coloured. Then all the people who belong to the cult are summoned thither. A "play" is given and sacrifices offered to ensure prosperity to the crops and herds and "plenty piccans" to the town.

At Ikot Ndua Iman, a flourishing palm-oil centre near Awa, beneath a sacred water, dwells another powerful Ndemm called Egbo Mbit Ibit. After the death of the chief priest, the Juju himself, through the mouth of the Idiong diviner, announces the name of the man who is to succeed. The present head of the cult is Chief Abassi Umaw Etuk. To him also go barren women, laden with offerings, and the usual intercessory rites are performed on their behalf.

The spirit is reported to show one peculiarity. "Should you fix a time, saying, 'On such a day I will go to visit the Juju'—lo! When you get there nothing will be seen; but should you, on the contrary, go unexpectedly, without a word to any one, you may chance to see Ndemm himself. Many tall, fine pots of old-world shape are ranged round the shrine, such as are rarely made nowadays. Manillas used to lie there also in great heaps; but to-day the school-boys, who no longer fear the spirit of the pool, have stolen most of these. Few are left and no fresh ones are brought, lest these too should be taken.

"In olden times, if any other town came to Ikot Ndua Iman with the intention of making war, the people of the vicinity sought out the priest of Egbo Mbit Ibit, and, led by him, went down to the sacred water, where they offered sacrifice and prayed for aid. Then, when the enemy came, the Juju struck them blind, so that they were forced to wander helplessly in the bush, and might easily be slain.

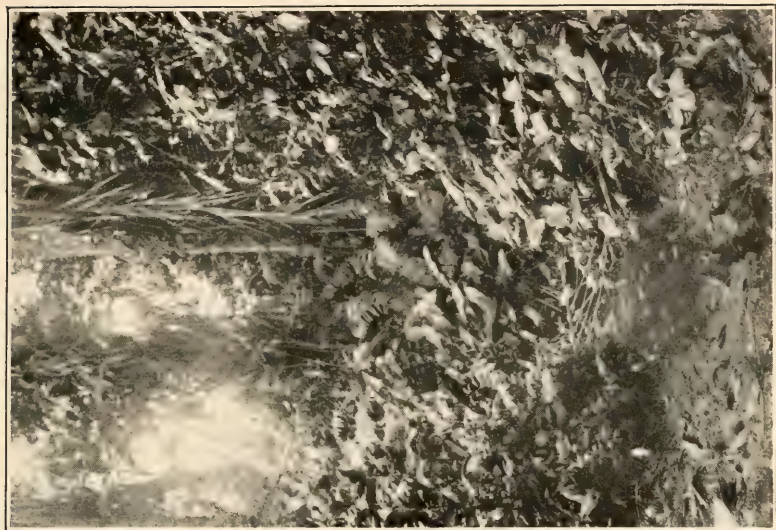
"In the dry season, after the planting of crops, should

no rain fall, those who still hold to the old faith take goats and other victims and offer them on the place of sacrifice, by the side of the holy pool. Then, usually that same night, but at farthest two days later, rain will surely come. Only over a small space does it fall, so as to moisten the crops of the children of the pool, but leaving the farms of neighbouring villages untouched. Should the wet season last too long, or storms prove too heavy, the people go again to the Juju and pray him to send them sunshine. So merciful is he, that their prayer is always granted.

“ If any one accused of witchcraft should swear falsely in the name of the spirit of the water, a terrible fate awaits him ; for that same night, when all the town lies sleeping, the Juju comes with the sound of strange music such as was never made by mortal hands, and carries off his victim. Weeks or months later, maybe, friends or acquaintances chance across such an one, wandering in the bush. No matter how well he may have known them in former days, the perjurer will never recognise them more, but only creeps past, unheeding, as though lost and bereft of his wits. No such sinner is known to have found his way home ; all died, alone and untended, in the depths of the bush. One chance of escape, however, existed ; should the perjurer have belonged to a very rich family, his people sometimes paid a great fine to the Juju that the curse might be revoked. Then the exile returned to his proper senses and came home once more.

“ When any townsman of Ikot Ndua Iman married a woman, he used to lead her down to the pool and call her name before the spirit. If, after this, she was false to her marriage vows, he first claimed back his dowry, and, so soon as that was repaid, the Juju killed her. Only if the husband went down to the water and said, ‘ I do not care for her particularly. Do not trouble, therefore, to do anything against her. I am willing to let her go,’ was she left unharmed.

“ So strong was the influence of this powerful Ndemm that in olden days hardly a woman of this town was known to prove unfaithful to her husband. Quietly they dwelt in their houses, and there were no divorces, save by



PLACE OF SACRIFICE,



SACRED WATER AT OKORO.

mutual consent. Only nowadays, when women are beginning to lose faith in the Juju, because the schoolboys have been taught that there is no real power in such things, are cases of unfaithfulness no longer rare in our town."

My informant, himself a Christian, spoke not complainingly, but with the air of one who voices a misfortune for which there is no help.

Near Ikot Okobo, to the south-east of Ndiya, lies another sacred water. On the occasion of our visit, the guide—a splendid specimen, coal-black and robed only in a loin-cloth, with two deep dimples and a charming expression—checked suddenly when about a quarter of a mile from the pool and announced that, such was his terror, he dared approach no nearer, unless another townsman could be induced to share the risk.

It is useless to try to hurry matters in Africa, so we waited, as patiently as might be, until a second man could be found. At last, fortified by the presence of this addition to our party, we went on, and soon arrived at a point where the bank sloped steeply to the brink of a little stream. This had cut its way through soft alluvial soil down to a stony bottom over which it flowed, to tumble, some few yards farther on, over a rocky ledge, in a little cascade. The point where the water falls over the rock is specially holy. Above it, from side to side, palm-leaf upon palm-leaf has been laid, forming an arch of verdure, while near by, on the right bank, a spot is to be seen grey with the cold ashes of sacrificial fires.

Perhaps the most beautiful of all these enchanted waters is the dwelling-place of a great Ndemmm near Awa. Beyond the little beach of golden sand, from which a steep-sloping path leads upward to this town, few canoes venture, for the water has an evil reputation, and not many are bold enough to dare its perils. Even the most adventurous will only do so if another can be persuaded to join in the risk; in which case the two craft keep close together, ever on the look-out to avoid the danger which lurks in the depths. Yet, some half-mile farther on, one enters a stretch of river beautiful as any even in this land of water-ways, each lovelier than the last. To right and left, small creeks

branch off from the main stream, meandering through fertile palm swamps, from which now and again a rough raft may be seen to glide, propelled by some dusky husband-man too poor to purchase even the rudest of canoes. From one bank to the other he crosses, silent and swift, and, as soon as possible, springs ashore, tethers the little craft, and hastens away from the ill-omened water.

At one point the river widens till it looks like a small lake. Luringly beautiful it stretched before us, its depths ringed round with vegetation so luxuriant as almost to hide the entrance to two creeks which here branch off. This enchanted water is the abode of Ndemm Inyang (River Juju), to which dread "Dweller beyond the Threshold" only white offerings may be brought—white cocks and hens, goats without spot or stain, and fathom on fathom of white cloth. The victims must be borne alive to the place of sacrifice, where their heads are severed at a blow and let fall into the water. Should the current bear these down stream, those who bring the oblation rejoice exceedingly, for they say, "Our offering is accepted. Ndemm Inyang is bearing it away to devour." Should the head, on the other hand, sink slow-circling, till lost to view amid the shadowed depths, the worshippers know that their gifts have been brought in vain. Then there is no other course but to consult another "Idiong Man" and offer a fresh sacrifice. So soon as the Juju has signified acceptance, by bearing forth the head, the rest of the flesh may be carried into the bush, there to be roasted and eaten. Nothing of all the offerings may be taken home; for should a man bear but the least fragment across his threshold, he would die before moon or stars rose again to mirror themselves in the magic water.

By one man's hand alone may sacrifice be offered to Ndemm Inyang. Should another venture to bring a gift, the Juju would refuse it altogether. The sacred office seems to be hereditary in the family of the present "Priest of the Holy Water," Abassi Umaw Etuk, who dwells nearby at Ikot Ndua Iman, and is head, as already stated, of the Egbo Mbit Ibit cult. Should any other seek to make offering, calamity would overtake the house of the rash

intruder. A well-loved son or daughter would die, or his best-loved wife be taken away. No one therefore ventures to approach the Juju, save under the ægis of the hereditary priest. It is well known too that, were such a thing done, not only would the daring man suffer sad loss, but the townsfolk would also make "big palaver" with him. In fact, until quite recent times, any one sacrificing for himself was killed by the indignant townsmen, because they believed that such brought offerings to the pythons which dwell in the depths of the stream, in order to bribe these to seek out and slay any man against whom he might have a grudge, amid the neighbouring villagers. The priest, however, still keeps watch and ward over the sacred water, lest some one thus evilly-minded should venture thither for such a purpose.

Farther on, the river narrows and grows still more beautiful. Near its banks the water lies, crystal clear above silver sand; but, shelving rapidly, takes on an ever deeper shade of emerald, till, in mid-stream, it attains almost to the indescribably beautiful tint of the Green Grotto of Capri.

As one bends over the edge of the "dug-out," gazing down through the clear translucent stream, it is easy to understand whence sprang its reputation for magical qualities. At the bottom, twenty feet below, the silver sand of its bed glimmers wanly. Against this shimmering background, speckled fish—great brown, fat fellows—may be seen darting hither and thither; and but for one danger, these might count on a long life of peace and plenty, in safe sanctuary, untroubled by care. Even for them, however, peril lurks in the haunted depths. Here and there great clumps of water-blooms raise their white, almond-scented heads, upon stems which spring from amid a mass of long crinkled leaves. These sway in the current, dark and snake-like against the green floor, and the places in which they grow are carefully avoided by the fish, "for beneath the shadow of each such clump a python has built his house," and should any unwary fish venture too near, the terrible inmate darts forth and devours the rash intruder.

"In the form of each python," so natives say, "dwells

the soul of a man. Very, very bad men they were, who took upon them serpent shape that they might the better wreak their evil will. They have houses under the water, from which they come forth twice a year, seeking victims. At the planting of farms and at the new yam harvest they come, and overturn any canoe which may chance to pass. Some years they demand many sacrifices, some years few. We do not know the cause of the difference." For each canoe overturned, a man is lost. He is the victim demanded by the Juju, and at the price of his blood the others may go free. When a canoe capsizes, it must be left to lie on the sandy floor, between the swaying lily stems, for none may dare to raise it up again.

As we glided slowly down stream, mapping the course of the magic river, our attention was caught, over and over again, by such sad derelicts lying beneath, some perfect in outline, and worth anything up to a hundred pounds sterling—a colossal sum in the eyes of poor sons of the soil such as the natives of these parts. The presence of the lost craft gave an impression impossible to describe, as to the reality of a spirit world beneath the waters; for they lay tethered, as it were, upon faëry beaches, as though but just abandoned by, or awaiting the coming of, some weird dweller in this strange water-world.

As we floated down to the place of sacrifice, the sun sank lower and lower, flushing the emerald water with opalescent tints, soft amethyst, and glowing rose. Small, strange patches of silver lay, like gleaming shells, deep down amid the weeds, so oval-clear in outline that only tearing up the leaves upon which they lay proved that their shine was but that of faëry silver, which vanished on reaching the surface, rather than substantial slivers of some unknown variety of mother-o'-pearl, strewn by elfin hands star-like amid the shadows.

Only in the pages of poets golden-tongued as Homer, or by actual sojourning beneath soft skies such as these, can the charm of such places be understood. Words fail to describe their glamour. Here surely, if anywhere, it should be easy to attain to the blessing promised those who are humble and lowly of heart; for hardly the youngest

and most self-satisfied of writers could be content with the effort to express, in mere words, sheer beauty such as that of these enchanted waters, over the surface of which flits, Fata Morgana-like, the very spirit of elusive, indescribable loveliness.

CHAPTER IV

JUJUS (*continued*)

'MBIAM

THROUGH his priests alone may 'Mbiam be approached. He is represented sometimes as a strange monster, half human, half bestial, moulded in terra-cotta ; sometimes under the form of gnarled roots or branches of fantastic shape ; sometimes, again, as a rudely carved fetish. The " medicine " proper to his cult is made of water drawn from one of his sacred springs, or the place where he dwells by riverside or seashore, mixed with palm-wine, eggs, and occasionally blood.

Only at high tide may such water be taken from sea or tidal river. A description of the 'Mbiam potion, by one who was forced to contribute some of his blood and then partake of palm-wine in which this, together with the blood of his enemies, had been mixed, will be found on p. 261.¹

The reason for the rite is given as follows : " When once a drop of the blood of another man has been imbibed, it is thought that the drinker's own death would follow any attempt to harm him from whose veins the blood was drawn. Thus the 'Mbiam oath is the strongest possible bond among natives of these regions, and, should two such have sworn blood brotherhood in this manner, each must defend the other, even to death."

Not far from the Pool of Life at Ikotobo lies one of the principal homes of 'Mbiam.

¹ Almost similar ingredients are used for the mixture over which the " Ravnoru Kida " oath is sworn in Timor-Laut (Riedel, *De sluik-en kroesharige rassen tuschen Selebes en Papua*, p. 284), as also the peace or friendship bond among the Tagalogs of the Philippines.



THE "MOTHER OF THE TOWN."

One Sunday afternoon, when passing along a road at Ikotobo, Mr. Eakin noticed a path leading into the bush. He asked whither it led, and was told, in the lowered voice of one imparting a secret of vast importance, "to the Waters of 'Mbiam."

To hear was to follow, and, with that unselfish willingness to share information which we found so characteristic of him, he took the first opportunity of telling us of his interesting discovery. It was not till a couple of months later, however, that time could be found to go thither; but one late August morning we set forth. The way led along a path bordered on either side by Juju shrines—some distinctly phallic in form—and with little funeral huts dotted here and there, till one of the many "town playgrounds" was reached. These are open spaces, shaded by great trees left standing when the lesser growths were cut or burned away. Prominent amongst them stood one which is regarded with special reverence, and is called the Mother of the Town, the gnarled and twisted branches of which, creeper-twined and fragrant with long trails of sweet white orchids, were bathed in the vivid gold of early morning sunlight. Beyond this the path branched off, a little to the left of the turning which leads to the "Lake of Life."

For some way we followed a "bush track," but suddenly our guide made a dive into what looked all but impenetrable jungle. Matchet-strokes soon cleared a thin path, and this we followed, along a gentle rise, until the sound of a small waterfall struck upon the ear. A little farther on the ground fell suddenly, in a slope almost as steep as a wall, and, after climbing downward for some few yards, we caught our first glimpse of the magic water.

When at length we had slipped and scrambled over the rich brown leaf-mould, in which flowering shrub, looped liane, and dark evergreen ran riot in luxuriant life, we found ourselves on the brink, gazing out over the water, opposite the spot where a little cascade foamed and splashed down the rocky wall. Here, too, as in the Lake of Life, one side of the sanctuary is of rock, overhung with mosses of velvety green, sparkling with diamond spray, and curtained by sun-kissed leaves. Save for this, and a space at the eastern

corner, whence a small stream flows out—its exit all but hidden beneath screening boughs—the pool is surrounded by walls of brown earth so steep that the clinging vegetation seems ever on the point of losing hold.

At the base lies the jade-coloured water, as if in a sardonyx cup inlaid with magic tracery of emerald and chrysoprase. In its midst the pool is so deep as to look almost black. This is probably the reason why it is usually spoken of as “the black and bitter waters of 'Mbiam.”

So potent is a draught from this witches' goblet, that a few drops mixed with food or drink are said to be enough to bring about the death of an enemy. Indeed, when the full rites have been observed, it is only necessary to sprinkle door-posts and lintel with the water, or pour some upon the path which leads to farm or homestead, to produce a like effect ; for as the pool of Isu Ma is sacred to the twin forces of love and life, so is that of 'Mbiam to their dread counterparts, the powers of hate and death.

He who by aid of this terrible spirit would sweep another from his path must bring an offering to the priest of the Juju, and follow him up the little stream which flows from out the pool. There, standing knee-deep in the ice-cold water, black with the shadow of the overhanging walls, he calls aloud the name of his enemy. Backward and forward it echoes, and before it dies away the priest takes up the cry and sends the doomed name across the water, that the spirit who dwells in its depths may hear and cause the man's undoing.

In exchange for his offerings the suppliant receives an earthen bowl, never before used, filled with the fatal water. This he must bear away and employ as the priest has ordered.

It was from the side where the stream flows out that Mr. Eakin approached the pool on his first visit. Thither he led us, after we had once more climbed the slope. At the point whence the stream issues, fresh offerings lay piled, while on a little platform some few yards above, the scarce-cold ashes of a sacrificial fire told of recent rites.

Here surely, if anywhere, might be found the goal of him who “sought hate's grove, in the gloomiest nook to dwell.” Yet even here the fair flower of good-will and



'MBIAM WATER AT IKOTOBO.

courtesy might be found by those who had eyes to see ; for, as Mr. Eakin told us, the head priest of the Juju volunteered permission for us to visit this water, hitherto forbidden to all eyes save his own. Standing above the place of sacrifice and looking down to the point where the steps of vengeance-seekers must be stayed—since it is not lawful for them to gaze upon the mysteries of the pool itself—we listened to the words of the priest of 'Mbiam. "As for you," he had said, "we know you for our friend and our District Commissioner also, together with the white women who are with him. We know the fashion of your dealings. To you therefore the sacred places shall be free and open ; but to no others, be they white or black, may the secrets be revealed, and we beg that neither of you will ask it of us."

For many years to come, therefore, these mysterious waters will again be hidden from all eyes save our own, and only by means of photographs can others gather an idea of their legend-haunted solitudes.

Many assert that gratitude is a quality unknown among these races. After the speech above quoted, no such reproach could be levelled by any one who had the faintest conception as to what the voluntary surrendering to alien eyes of the mysteries of such holy places, shrouded in the carefully guarded silence of centuries, can mean to people such as these.

The working of this particular 'Mbiam was brought to our notice as follows :

One day in late September, while we were resting half-way during the course of a tiring march, a man named Abassi Ekong of Ikot Imaw came up to ask help. In his hand was a bottle containing some of the water of 'Mbiam from the pool above described. He was shaking with terror, and the story came tumbling out incoherently enough. Briefly stated, he had stolen away the love of the wife of Utok Adiaha Abang, of Ndukpo Ise, and, though he had repaid the full dowry, thus, by native custom, both freeing the woman and marrying her, the first husband had not forgiven either of them. To the priest of 'Mbiam the latter therefore went, and, after offering sacrifice, obtained a large

bowl full of the fatal water. Some of this he threw over his former wife, crying that the children she bore to her new husband should all die ; some he flung upon the path to their house, and sprinkled some upon the door-posts. The bottle which Abassi Ekong brought to us had been buried, so he stated, in a place over which his wife and he were continually passing ; but the woman noticed her former husband at work on the spot, and after his departure dug up what he had concealed, and gave it to her present spouse to bring before me. The man stated sadly that, owing to this Juju, their children were dying one by one.

Another home of 'Mbiam may be found at a place, just before the Mbo flows out into the Cross River, where the left bank of the former is broken by a small creek. The entrance to this is all but screened, so that it would probably escape notice from any save those who, like ourselves, knew of its whereabouts. Hardly, however, had the prow of our canoe entered the narrow channel than we saw that it widened out into a little bay, the waters of which at high tide almost lap against the threshold of the shrine of the great Juju Ita Brinyan or, as it is sometimes called, Atabli Inyang.

The spirit is so powerful that, should one pluck a leaf and throw it upon the waters of creek or river—even upon the waves of the sea itself—calling meanwhile upon the Juju and mentioning the name of the enemy whom it is desired to harm, ebb and flow, wave or ripple, soft breeze or storm wind, will waft it on and on, till at length it is washed up on the grass-grown shore before the shrine of Ita Brinyan.

The little bay is full of leaves, golden or copper-tinted, brown or freshest green. So soon as one of these touches the shore—light-wafted despite its burden of hate—the Juju wakes to the message and thenceforth lies in wait till the canoe of the man against whom its aid was invoked can be lured into deep water. Then the spirit overturns the rude craft and draws down his victim into the mud and ooze, never again to rise to the surface till life is extinct.

When a man thus finds his end, the ears and nose of the

corpse are cut off, as a sign that he died through the hatred of one of the votaries of Ita Brinyan, and his skull is usually placed in the Juju-house.

In olden days, while a "play" in honour of the fetish was being given, should a canoe full of peaceful traders pass along the river, or should any chance wayfarer trespass within the precincts of the "Sacred Bush," priest and followers gave chase, either by water or land. There was but little chance of escape for such unwitting intruders, who were nearly always captured, dragged before the shrine, and offered in sacrifice.

Now that such a method of obtaining victims is no longer allowed, the Juju is said to sally forth and himself seize those unfortunate enough to pass by during the celebration of his rites. It is stated that such are easily known, because when Ita Brinyan has laid hold of any man the victim is drawn by irresistible force out of the bush, or up from the river, and at length appears before the Juju-house, vomiting blood.

On our surprise visit, the first made by any white man, the shrine was gruesome enough, with its piles of skulls, about fifty in number, many of which were new-brought. I am gratified to learn that my successor, visiting it some months later, found only half-a-dozen or so, all of which are reported to have been old ones—a reform which shows considerable wisdom on the part of the Juju priests! Before the larger heap lay a great carved tusk, bearing in low relief the figure of the sacred crocodile, together with what seemed the conventionalised representation of a canoe. This juxtaposition, taken together with what was known of the methods of the Juju, suggested that the spirit at times assumes crocodile shape for the destruction of his victims. This supposition was confirmed later by the testimony of several chiefs, among them Efa Abassi Ibaka, who added that the form assumed by Ita Brinyan differed from that of other crocodile Jujus, in that he never appeared save in the shape of a smaller variety of crocodile called by the natives Feom Nkoi and said to bear sharply-pointed spikes along the dorsal ridge. This, like the pigmy elephant also reported to exist in the neighbourhood, is far more dreaded

than its larger-sized brethren, on account of the special fierceness with which it is credited.

To the central pillar of the little Juju-house a strange object was bound. This was a piece of gnarled root or branch, sculptured, it would seem, by the hand of Nature herself; for though from a little distance it looked as if human agency must have been responsible at least for the cutting of the eye, a nearer view showed this to be merely a knot in the wood, and no trace of artificial formation could be detected. Little wonder that primitive man, finding such a strangely-shaped object in the shadows of the neighbouring bush, should bear it home to reverence as the sign of some unknown power.

Here and there upon the head of the fetish small feathers were stuck, while a cavity beneath the bend of the neck was filled with these. A rough oval, formed from wild rubber or some other adhesive substance, had been smeared upon the pillar itself, a few inches above the strange growth. Upon the space thus prepared, chickens' feathers had been thickly plastered. At the base of the column lay an ancient skull, encased in a network of copper wires, and behind that again was a little pile of trade-gin bottles, the contents of which had been poured out as libations.

Near the door stood a great drum of the usual type, carved from a solid block of wood. On both ends of this, little tufts of feathers were to be seen, held in place, like those already mentioned, by some sticky substance.

Toward the back of the room a curtain of plaited palm-leaf screened off an inner compartment, in the midst of which a row of fascinatingly mysterious objects were propped—one, a short spear with haft elaborately carved in the form of a human figure; strange sceptre-like staves of much the same shape, but without iron tips and with curiously flattened faces, and a queer red-painted instrument, ending above in two horns like those of an irregular crescent. This latter the priest of the Juju declared to be a whistle or trumpet by which "the call of the spirit" was sounded.

Before these also a heap of skulls was laid. So unusual in shape were some of the carvings that, since there was too little light to give hope of a good photograph, I should

have liked to ask one of my companions to sketch them. The odour of the house was, however, so overpowering, owing, in part it would seem, to the scarce-dry skulls, that they were more concerned to beat a hasty retreat.¹

Just before our visit a case in which a man, Antikka Antikka by name, accused his wife of invoking this Juju against him had been brought up in the native court at Idua Oronn. In the course of his sworn statement the plaintiff said :

“Since my wife, Owo Ama Esie, invoked Ita Brinyan against me, my canoe has capsized twice, though such a thing never happened to me before. This is in accordance with what we know about the Juju, for should any one invoke it against a man and refuse to revoke it, he will lose his life upon the water.”

To this one of the members of court objected, in all seriousness, that the statement told in the woman's favour ; since Ita Brinyan was well known to be so powerful a Juju that had he really been invoked against any one, the man thus cursed would certainly not have returned to tell the tale. To this the other members agreed.

In another case which came before the same court, Ekong Isemin charged six townsmen with calling upon Ita Brinyan to kill him. Prosecutor stated on oath :

“About two months ago I was staying in a little hut by the river-side for the fishing. On my return to town I found that the chiefs had ordered that every man should come to the Egbo house. I therefore accompanied them. The townfolk said that I and 'Ndiyo 'Ntun had killed a certain man named Ema who had lately died ; so I left the Egbo house and went homeward. On the way I saw Iyama, 'Nkeremayo, Esien, Okpodo, Awai and Ikwo Orok, holding leaves in their hands and calling upon Ita Brinyan to kill me.”

To the shrine of this Juju were brought the skulls of those offered in sacrifice to ensure plentiful catches of cray-fish.²

¹ Since writing the above I learn that the Juju-house was destroyed by my successor. The various cult objects here described are therefore no longer to be seen. It is consequently a matter of still greater regret to us that detailed drawings were not taken.

² See p. 317.

At Urua Eye, a town only a few miles off, three other well-known 'Mbiam are said to dwell. The first of these, Inyang Edue, is principally used for the recovery of debts. The creditor goes to the priest of the cult and asks the price of his services. Then, when this has been settled, the priest bears the Juju to the debtor's house and, if the latter does not agree with his adversary quickly, the spirit is credited with the power to strike the offender dead or destroy his reason.

Awtaw Awkpaw is the second Juju, and is used for the same purpose as that last described. A little of the "medicine" is usually placed before the debtor's door, generally early in the morning, and if the latter does not find means to pay the debt before sundown and also offer sacrifice, the Juju "catches" him, and causes him to vomit blood.

Thirdly, at Awsaw Urua Eye a sacred water is to be found, the indwelling spirit of which is named Angweme. Should a man go down to the brink and call upon this 'Mbiam to avenge him upon an enemy, the unfortunate foe will swell and swell until he becomes three times his proper size. Only by discovering the name of the man who has brought this misfortune upon him, and persuading him to revoke the Juju, can such a sufferer hope to be cured of his affliction.

Between Engwang and Jamestown dwells another renowned 'Mbiam, the clients of which formed themselves into a society named Etifit Engwang. The members of this cult were all old men, and the Juju was locally regarded as stronger than Idiong. The principal rites were held at the time of the new yams, on the brink of the magic water. Should any non-member chance to pass by and witness even the smallest part of the ceremonies, he had to bring a sacrifice consisting of sheep, goats, salt, and fish, otherwise the Juju would send sleeping-sickness upon him in punishment.

This society was said by my informant to have been stopped by Government about 1904, because members were in the habit of sallying out and seizing upon passers-by to offer up to their Juju.

Two widely different reasons for invoking the aid of 'Mbiam were related before the court at Idua Oronn. In the first case Abassi Adue stated on oath :

" About seven years ago one of my friends named Mba was sick and therefore told Emo and myself to go and buy 'Mbiam for him. We did so, and when the Juju was brought 'Mba directed us to put some of it upon his children's heads and upon the road before his house, saying : ' May 'Mbiam kill any one who shall seek to harm my children after I am gone ! ' "

In confirmation of this evidence Eyo Inyan stated on oath :

" I was sent with Abassi Adue to get 'Mbiam to put on the heads of 'Mba's children, in order to protect them from being sold as slaves or suffering ill-treatment by his family. We did as he bade us, and also put some of the Juju medicine on the road leading to his compound."

A very different reason for employing 'Mbiam may be found recorded in the judgment books of this court—this time as a means of reducing a free-born wife to a condition of slavery. The plaintiff Edak Ekpenyong stated on oath :

" About five years ago Asukwor gave me 'Mbiam at Uya-Oronn, saying that he had bought me from a man at Udun Uko, and that, should I visit my father, 'Mbiam must kill me. He also said that from that day I must consider myself to be a slave. About three years ago he had given me Juju forbidding me to make complaint to any one, or to take action against him, no matter what he did to me. After this, he refused to treat me as his wife, and forbade me his bed ; but swore on a certain Juju that he would not live with me any more, and wanted his dowry back."

Asukwor, the accused, stated :

" I gave 'Mbiam to Edak at Ikwita, to prevent her from quitting my house. About six years ago she abused one of my daughters, saying that the latter was a 'twin girl.' So I gave 'Mbiam to her and to two other women, that they must become the slaves of that 'twin girl.' The girl died a short time ago and I revoked the 'Mbiam to show that they were no longer slaves of the deceased. When my daughter was ill, I invoked 'Mbiam and other Jujus upon

all my wives, that if any of them had harmed the sick girl the Juju might kill them. After this, Edak came and asked me to revoke the 'Mbiam, on which I did so. I gave her 'Mbiam again a few months ago to prevent her from going to another man and from buying witchcraft medicine. She refused to swear not to do this, so I invoked 'Mbiam upon her."

(*Questioned by Court.*) "Is it the custom to enslave a married woman to a daughter?"

(*Answer.*) "Yes."

(Several chiefs here rose to protest against the truth of this statement.)

(*Questioned by Court.*) "If the girl had not died, would the women have remained as her slaves?"

(*A.*) "Yes."

(*Q.*) "Supposing your wife had been a Calabar woman, would you have given her 'Mbiam to make her a slave of your daughter?"

(*A.*) "No. I would not."

(*Q.*) "Why then did you enslave Edak?"

(*A.*) "Because she is only an Oronn woman."

Otu Abassi, called as a witness, stated on oath:

"About five years ago I was at Asukwor Nya's house and his daughter came and complained to him that Edak Ekpenyong had called her a 'twin girl.' He therefore invoked 'Mbiam on Edak that she should become a slave of that 'twin girl,' but revoked it afterwards."

(*Q.*) "Is it your custom to give 'Mbiam to a married woman to become the slave of a daughter?"

(*A.*) "No. It is not usual."

(*Q.*) "Suppose that you were the father of a girl who had married a man of another tribe, and you heard that your daughter had been given 'Mbiam to cause her to become a slave, what would you do?"

(*A.*) "I should go and inquire of my son-in-law, and, if found to be true, I should consider her thenceforward to be a slave" (!).

CHAPTER V

WITCHCRAFT, MAGIC AND DIVINATION

ONE evening Chief Daniel Henshaw, speaking of this subject, said :

“ Witchcraft (Ifott) is a very deep thing. Among our people there is nothing else so deep, and the dread of it darkens multitudes of lives. Those of our family have always striven to keep themselves clear from the taint of such a thing ; yet I myself have studied it deeply, from the outside as one may say, in order to give right judgment and advice upon such cases as came before Government.

“ Those versed in such mysteries can know what is going on hundreds of miles away, and impose their will upon men afar off. To all who have given themselves over to the power of the devil, long and prosperous lives are accorded, for nothing troubles them. They can look into the future and see what is going to happen ; then, if they learn that danger threatens, they have only to call upon the evil spirits to come and protect them against it.

“ Those who have thus given themselves over to evil, strive to keep their compact secret from every one outside the witch company ; for a brand is upon each, invisible to ordinary men, but clear to the eyes of all similarly given over to a common master.

“ A witch or wizard can go into his house and close the door. Those outside think that everything is as it should be, and that the person within is quietly sleeping. Yet, maybe, only his body lies there, while his soul is away with his witch company.

“ Once an Efik man was said to have obtained a medicine from a strong Juju, by the power of which he could call out

all witches and wizards in the neighbourhood during the night, and keep them standing outside his compound till dawn break. Then he would call together the townsfolk, who came, and saw, and knew them one by one.

"When the persons whose wraiths had thus been held up to public obloquy learned that their true character was known, they went quietly home and died of shame; since they no longer wished to live, now that their evil nature was revealed to those among whom until then they had passed as honest citizens.

"When 'devil's powder' is made for purposes of witchcraft, the sacrificial animals, usually goats and fowls, are taken into the bush and there burnt to cinders. These are mixed with the ashes of the fires by which they had been consumed, and the whole, ground to fine powder, enters into the ingredients of all 'medicines' for ghosts or witchcraft.

"There is a man at Abakpa who has a powder which he rubs upon his forehead, the palms of his hands, and the soles of his feet. By the power of this he can go out at midnight and watch the doings of all witches and wizards who are abroad. He can know them, but they cannot see him, because the magic powder keeps him invisible. The only condition imposed is that he should not speak even a single word lest the sound should guide them to him. So long as he keeps silence he is quite safe, because the power of the powder is stronger than any of theirs."

The rite about to be described is reminiscent of those in common use, not only during the Middle Ages, but even up to our own day. Yet the most careful inquiries failed to discover any European source through which it might have been conveyed to my informant, a native of pure blood, who had learnt it from fellow-tribesmen versed in such matters who firmly believe in its efficacy.

"If you long for riches," the narrator said, "the swiftest way to obtain your desire is to take a long sword, which must be of old workmanship, since in such ancient things strange powers lie. With this firmly grasped in the hand you must go forth, at midnight, to a waste place.

"Arrived there, sprinkle oil upon the ground; then,



THE LATE CHIEF DANIEL HENSHAW.

with the sword above described, draw a circle round you, taking care that the line joins perfectly. For evil spells it is necessary to cry, 'Stand with me, O Demon, in what I am about to do!' For such rites a 'strong mind' is indispensable, since, should you fear, though never so little, the protecting power of the charm will be broken, and the waiting devils seize upon you at once.

"Supposing that you have the firmness of purpose necessary for success, immediately on the appearance of the evil spirit called up by the spell, you should demand riches or whatever may be your desire in summoning him. In return he will ask in how few years you are ready to become his man. You, on the contrary, bargain for how many years you may live to enjoy a certain sum. He strives to beat you down to the least time possible, but in the end, should you remain steadfast, grants far more than he at first offered—usually almost as much as was asked. A devil has never been known to break his part of the compact; but, on the other hand, a man so bound dies on the day arranged, and none knows the horror of his fate!

"Those who hate another greatly, often call upon the name of a demon and, after a libation of rum or palm-wine, point out where their enemy will sleep that night. Later the fiend goes to the house indicated, and, hanging over the victim, breathes pestilence upon him that he may inhale it in his sleep and wake to find himself in the grip of some deadly disease.

"A further point should be held in mind. When you have finished stating your desire to the evil powers you must, on the instant, start to run for your home, and, once over the threshold, slam to the door; for should the demon overtake and pass you on the way you will sicken and probably die, in any case falling irredeemably into his power."

Perhaps the love of such useless lore runs in families. At any rate, in the library bequeathed to us by a near relative is to be found a book entitled *A New and Complete Illustration of the Celestial Science of Astrology*, in which one may read an account, strangely like, but far more circum-

stantial, of the rites to be observed in calling up ghosts or devils.

The Ibibio have a very real respect for demons ; for while good Jujus may, in the case of those too poor to provide the actual offerings decreed by custom, be put off with mere imitations of the things supposed to be sacrificed—such, for instance, as old skulls of goats or dogs, carved wooden figures of animals, or pieces of bent palm-stem, hardened by fire to make them look like metal rods or wires, or even “ ant-houses ” in place of human beings—yet only animals in the best condition may be offered up to the powers of evil. At funeral ceremonies, too, the hearts of goats, sheep and chickens are cooked and laid out in little calabashes for them, but these offerings may never be taken from an animal past the prime of life or in anything but the best of health.

When young men are cut off by some violent death, it has been noticed that misfortune usually befalls those left behind. In such a case the relatives consult a powerful Juju priest, who asks the oracle to declare the cause of the trouble. Sometimes sacrifices are demanded to appease the manes of the departed ; but more often it is pointed out that the dead man is too angry, because of his own untimely death, for his spirit to be softened by offerings. Then the only way for the family to secure themselves from further molestation is to dig up and burn the corpse, that there may no longer be the wherewithal for the spirit to work its evil will. For as the body is consumed and turns to dust, so the astral also disintegrates and can no longer come back to earth, or meddle with human affairs.

It sometimes happens that, through superior cunning or good fortune, a witch or wizard manages to elude suspicion, and dies in the odour of sanctity, lamented by all. After death such ghosts seem no longer able to conceal their evil nature, but come back to their old haunts, to play all sorts of mischievous tricks upon those left behind.

Such a case is reported from Eyo Abassi, near Idua Oronn on the Cross River. About seven years ago a chief died, and as he was a very great man and dearly beloved, he was buried—according to the old custom which still obtains

among the Oronn, although it has practically died out among other Ibibio—in a grave, deep dug beneath the floor of the house.

After this death many small misfortunes fell upon the family. Food set aside for absent members disappeared before their return; or soup prepared with special pains and left to simmer over the hearth was often found to have been stolen. Treasured pieces of property, too, disappeared one by one. All this created a feeling of distrust and annoyance, and the family began to quarrel among themselves, each accusing the other of theft. After such a state of affairs had gone on for some years, while ill-feeling gradually waxed higher and higher, some one chanced to notice a small hole at the corner of one of the rooms, just above the grave.

At once suspicion was aroused, since it is by such apertures that ghosts are usually thought to return. The relatives joined together to investigate, and dug up the body. By this time it had lain over six years in the ground; yet when disinterred it was stated to have been found quite fresh. Even the blood was said to run free in the veins, and the only difference reported between this long-buried corpse and a sleeping form was that no motion of breath could be seen.

Upon this uncanny discovery a consultation was held as to what was best to be done. A guard was set upon the body, and meanwhile firewood was collected in quantities and built up in an open space some way from the house. At dusk the corpse was carried forth and laid upon the pyre. A flaming brand was held against the logs, previously saturated with inflammable oils, and the whole was soon consumed.

Such a scene is weird in the extreme. If possible, a still, moonless night is chosen for the cremation ceremony. Kinsmen and townsfolk gather round, shadows from out the shadows, till they form a ring, encircling the pyre, but at some distance from it. Soundlessly the corpse-bearers come from the dwelling, deposit their strange burden, and then hasten to hide themselves amid the crowd of onlookers.

All stood breathlessly watching while the red eye of the

brand was seen to near the pyre. When the first flames shot up, illuminating the tense, drawn faces of the bystanders, and casting flickering lights and shadows over the grim outlines of the corpse, a gasping cry went up from hundreds of throats. As the flames rose higher, the fringe of encircling bush sprang into sudden distinctness against the quiet sky. Wavering light and shade played strange tricks with the body, which seemed as if struggling to rise or writhing in the torture of the ever-waxing fire.

At length something seemed to give way within the pyre ; the central part collapsed, while red logs fell inward from the sides, mercifully burying all from sight. A cry went up. Men ran forward and flung oil and native pitch upon the fire, which roared upward in a very sheet of flame.

As the glare rose, the crowd started dancing, dark figures silhouetted against that glowing background—savage and terrible, but with a certain beauty of rhythmic movement. Tom-toms sounded from out the darkness, and the leaping flames lighted up waving arms, flying feet, or the rippling muscles of great shoulders, till the dancers looked like some huge group of bronze Bacchanals wakened to life by a wizard's spell.

That even to-day only white influence prevents the summary execution of those suspected of witchcraft, is proved by case after case ; of which the following, lately tried in Oyubia Court, may be cited as typical :

“ About three months ago the half-brother of an 'Mbukpo chief, Abassi-'Ntong by name, died after a severe illness. At once Abassi took his drum and beat it round the town, crying : ‘ The woman Ina Awak has killed my half-brother by her witchcraft. Therefore I will hide myself in the bush and slay her with my matchet as she passes by, since in these days the white man forbids us to try witches by ordeal, according to the custom of our fathers ! ’

“ Some time after it came to the ears of the would-be murderer that Ina Awak was going that day to visit her daughter Odiong Efere at Ukaw Uda. So soon as he heard this, he hurried back to his house, seized a matchet, and ran and hid himself in the bush by the road down which the woman must pass. When Ina came along, he sprang out

and beheaded her, carrying off the head but leaving the body upon the road. After this he went home and sought out his brother Ikaw Idemm, to whom he said :

“ ‘ To-day I killed Ina Awak with my matchet on the Ukaw Uda road, because by her witchcraft she caused the death of our brother.’ To this Ikaw replied : ‘ You have done a wrong thing, and I do not wish to hear any more about it ! Such things are against the law of the white man ! Beside, I am of opinion that our late brother died of himself, and that nobody killed him ! ’ ”

Among the Anang people, north of Ndiya, a strange superstition obtains. The inhabitants are credited with going to the graves of those newly dead, and there making a sacrifice to ensure the aid of evil spirits. After this they beat upon the mound with a plantain stem—the African tree of life—calling, at each stroke, on the name of the corpse, till, at length, the dead man is said to arise from his grave. Then the sorcerers bind him at once, and sell him into captivity far away.

Such strange wanderers from another world seem never quite to regain possession of their right senses, but go always as in a dream, speaking little and in a very low voice, and moving “ softly, softly.” One such was reported to me as having lived at Henshaw Town Plantation. He was said to have crept sadly about his work, never eating with others, nor joining in their plays and laughter. These sad revenants can never eat ordinary food, but go alone into the bush, where they pluck certain leaves which are thought to nourish them. In the Efik tongue these ghost-men are called “ Owomi Emeade Ke Ude Esio,” *i.e.* “ persons drawn from the grave.”

There are many magic medicines or Ibokk¹ to protect people from the evil eye, from snake-bite, from the attacks of bush beasts, from ghosts, and from would-be robbers. Among these may be mentioned two methods of special interest for the safeguarding of house or farm from depredation. By the first, a bundle of small sticks, bound round with tie-tie, from which dangle strips of coloured cloth, is

¹ For definition of Ibokk see p. 21.

made by the "medicine man." Over this certain rites are performed, and it is then given to the purchaser, to be carried home and hung within the house, near the principal entrance, or from a post in the midst of his farm. Should would-be robbers enter any place so protected, a serpent sallies forth from the bundle and attacks them, winding coil upon coil round their limbs, and slowly pressing them, Laocoon-like, to death, unless the owner of the Juju hurries to the spot in time to save them.

A useful and distinctly humorous form of magic is that with which some witch-doctors are thought to have the power to endue the long hoes used in farm work. Over one of these spells are recited, while a potent "medicine" is poured upon it; after which it is given back to its owner, to be hung up in some inconspicuous place in his farm.

No sooner does a thief creep over the boundary, with the intention of purloining fruit or vegetables, than the magic hoe springs to his hand. Unconsciously the man's fingers clasp themselves round the haft. He is bent down by a power there is no resisting, and finds himself forced, against his will, to hoe and hoe. Not for a moment can he pause, even to straighten his back, so long as a single weed remains on the farm, a single yam needs banking, or one clod of earth would be the better for breaking; so long must the ill-doer continue to work for the man he had intended to rob. Only when the owner arrives on the scene, should he take pity, can the magic hoe be released from the hand of the thief.

Many witch-doctors are thought capable of making a "magic" to shut up the mouths of witnesses, so that these are unable to give testimony in court, and also other "medicines," by means of which a favourable judgment may be obtained. Such a case came before the Court at Idua Oronn on the Cross River. During the course of the trial, the prosecutor, a man named Esa, stated on oath:

"About a week ago I took action against Abassi'Nkpeyah, who, on receiving the summons, hired Udaw Aming to bewitch me. I saw Udaw go into Abassi's house. I therefore followed, and found him making a medicine to shut

my mouth. That this was so, he owned to me and to two other men."

Adia, called as witness, also stated on oath :

"Udaw Aming told me that Abassi came and asked him to make medicine which he could take to court in order that he might obtain a favourable judgment in his case. I asked what he gave Abassi, and he answered that it was a powder made of Juju roots. He also made another magic medicine to shut Efa's mouth, so that he should not be able to give evidence. All this Udaw told me in his own house."

The Ibokk 'Nduoho is supposed to have special power to strike witnesses dumb when they come into court, or to affect their memory, so that they can neither remember nor put into words what they want to say.

Here too, as is the world-wide custom, witches and wizards try to obtain hair, nail-clippings, or a piece of cloth long worn by the person whom they desire to injure. They lay these before the shrine of some bad Juju, begging the spirit to follow on the trail of him to whom the relic once belonged and destroy him utterly. This course was much resorted to till recent years, in order to prevent the escape of slaves.

At Calabar, when a much-loved child dies the parents weep bitterly, believing that an enemy has caused its death. Then they clip the hair and nails from the corpse and carry them to a witch-doctor, or to the priest of some bad Juju, crying : "Behold the hair and nails of one fresh slain ! Take them and lay them before the spirit, that he may destroy him who killed my child."

Much the same ceremony is adopted by a man who believes that another is trying to injure him. In such a case the suppliant cuts off a lock of his own hair and lays it before the Juju, saying :

"This is my hair. I give it into your keeping. Watch over me, and if any one tries to kill me, follow and slay him, that I may remain unhurt."

In one case heard before the Native Court, Odu Amayak stated on oath :

"Uye came and told me that Esang Abiana and 'Ntak-Ikang were bewitching me, and that, if I disbelieved this,

I should question my cousin on the matter. I gave him some food and drink for warning me ; and he further stated that the accused had used my under-vest and nail-clippings for making a charm against me. I questioned my cousin, as Uye advised, and he said : ' Some charms are buried under the path to kill you, and some have been put in your drink.' On learning this I took action against accused."

A case which illustrates certain points concerning the customs of witches and wizards came up before the Native Court at Idua Oronn. In this Offiong Esuk accused a fellow-townsmen named Edun Etuk Unaw of defamation of character, for having proclaimed his name as a wizard before the townsfolk. The plaintiff stated on oath :

" One evening, about two months ago, I heard a noise in the middle of the town. I did not go out, but my wife, Ekun Etiga, went to see what was the matter. She returned and told me that she had found the man who made the noise, and that it was Edun Etuk Unaw crying that he had caught a man who went out witching. Shortly after this, the accused himself came to my house, and said : ' Afo Offiong Esuk Eyo ! Ke ami 'nkut 'nte enekde ifnot ke etak isip 'ndien efehe oduk ikot,' *i.e.* ' You Offiong Esuk Eyo ! I saw you dancing witchcraft near a coconut tree, and you ran away into the bush.' He beat the drum round the town, telling the people that I was a wizard, and showed them a footprint, saying that it was mine."

Arwo, one of the wives of plaintiff, stated on oath :

" About two months ago I was sleeping with my husband. His other wife, Ekun Etiga, told us that the noise was made by Edun Etuk Unaw, who proclaimed that he had caught Offiong Esuk on the previous night dancing witchcraft."

In answer to the question put by a member of court as to whether the man might not have remained at home with his wives, while his astral body went out to dance by the roadside, Ekpre Ken, one of the head-men of the place, rose to give evidence.

" I am the chief of the town," he said, " to which both prosecutor and accused belong. When a person goes out to dance witchcraft, he always goes with his whole body, and not in spirit alone."

Edun Etuk Unaw stated :

" I met Offiong Esuk one night, by moonlight, dancing on the road. On seeing me he ran away into the bush. I ran after him, shouting his name. I published the matter in the town-square, saying that he had danced a witchcraft dance upon the road. He was the man whom I saw as a wizard at night-time with a loin-cloth."

(*Question by Court.*) " Do witches always dance with a cloth ? "

(*Answer.*) " Yes." ¹

One night, while staying at Idua Oronn, we were told that a celebrated diviner was in the town, and, since we wished to learn something as to Ibibio methods of divination, we asked whether he would be willing to consult the oracle on our behalf. He agreed, and came to the Rest-house one evening, after dark had fallen.

First, he stipulated that we should go into a room and close both doors and windows, that he might be unobserved. After this had been done, he asked for a white plate, a glass of clear water, and a white cloth. When these were brought, he took from a folded handkerchief a handful of finely-scraped woody fibre, white and soft, obtained from some fresh-cut branch, after the bark had been stripped off. This he strewed upon the plate, till it lay about half an inch deep, over all but the rim. Next he carefully poured in the water, then gathered the fibre together in his fingers and pressed out the moisture, forming the pith into a ball,

¹ It is unfortunate that further inquiries were not made at the time concerning the kind of cloth worn on such occasions. Only lately, however, have I become aware of the importance of studying the symbolism of clothes—the " Sartor Resartus " of primitive peoples. Since writing the above, it has been my good fortune to have the opportunity of learning much on this subject from the tribes of Degama District. Here, also, several cases have been brought to my notice which prove that dancing by the water-side, in waste places, or by the roadway at night time, is regarded as a very grave offence and a sure sign of witchcraft. The cloth worn on such occasions is that called Okuru, woven from cross strands of cotton and palm fibre. So far as we could learn there are only two occasions when this " magical " cloth may legitimately be used. First, before the birth of a woman's eldest-born piccan, it is folded for a few moments round the body of the mother-to-be. During this time she must sit with closed eyes ; for, should but a glance rest upon it, she would die. Secondly, it is wrapped, as winding-sheet, round the corpse of one who has died of smallpox, when prepared for burial.

and leaving a fine pinkish sediment over the bottom of the plate. He then drew the white cloth round the outer rim, gathering the ends together in both hands, and, bending his head lower and lower, drew up the cloth till it covered both head and plate. In this crouching posture he sat till the seance was finished.

We were naturally anxious to ask nothing in the nature of a leading question, so only requested him to tell us anything that he could see concerning us. First came a long pause, then, in a low voice which sounded as if it came from far away, the seer began to speak.

"I see three men," he said, "who hate the 'white man' very bitterly. Many times they have tried to take your life, but, as each attempt failed, they went before the Juju and prayed him to kill you, making rich offerings and buying strong medicine. I see men on the path burying the magic in places over which you will tread. I see them in the court-house, pointing Juju towards the place where you sit in judgment, so that it may cause you to fall down dead; but all is of no avail, because there is a power behind you which is stronger than theirs. When, from many failures, they grew aware of this, they went to a very great Juju and said: 'We see that you cannot touch the life of this white man, since the power which guards him is stronger than yours. Nevertheless, put forth your strength and raise up trouble for him, that his life may become hard and his days pass in bitter vexation.'"

Again there was a long pause. The diviner reached out a hand and took up the little ball of pulp which he had laid beside him, and, as we could see from the shadow behind the cloth, passed it over his forehead before replacing. Afterwards his voice began again, even lower and fainter than before. He spoke each word as if by intense effort. How he could have known what he next said, unless through access to confidential papers which it would seem next to impossible for him to have obtained, I do not pretend to explain. We ourselves, at the time, had guessed only a part of what he stated; the rest was so incredible that we should never have imagined it. It could, therefore, hardly have been a case of thought reading, and the absolute

correctness of the prediction was not proved till months later. As a not uninteresting experience, I should like to give the details of what, to us, will always remain an inexplicable riddle ; but to do so might cause pain, and could, in any case, hardly fail to harm those concerned in his revelations. I may, perhaps, add that there were three witnesses beside myself present on this occasion.

Pause after pause interrupted the recital, each accompanied by the passing over the forehead of the little ball of pith, as though to wipe off the drops wrung from him by the exertion of causing the future to give up its secrets. Last of all, the seer announced that things would end well for us if certain conditions were observed. As, quite apart from any occult revelation, these were such as would have suggested themselves from mere motives of prudence, they were carried out and, as good fortune decreed, with the happiest results !

The gift of prophecy is said to be not uncommon among Ibibio. Nearly all Oronn chiefs, for instance, are credited with the power of foretelling their own deaths. The late head chief of Akaiya, Abassi by name, is said to have possessed this gift in a remarkable degree. As an example, the following story was told :

“ When the present chief, Antikka Usaw, was young, he served Abassi of Akaiya, who was the head of his family. One day, a cousin, named Umaw 'Nyenn, who was of the same ' age-class ' as himself, sat lordily on the verandah of the head chief's house drinking and idling, when Antikka went by, bearing a load of firewood upon his head. Umaw pointed his finger at the industrious boy, and called out jeeringly :

“ ‘ Look ! There is a free-born lad, who, instead of coming to sit down and amuse himself in our company as an equal, prefers to be like a slave to a master ; working by sun and rain and leaving every pleasure for the sake of serving another ! ’

“ On hearing these words, Chief Abassi rose up and, pointing also to the boy, said :

“ ‘ Look well at this youth. As you say, he is serving me. You think that you are of greater account than he.

Listen ! I tell you that he will become chief of this town, while you yourself will be forced to go and beg from him your daily bread ! ’

“ After a few years the prophet died, and Antikka started working for himself. Everything prospered with him and he got on so well that he soon became the chief man in his town, both for wisdom and riches. The boastful cousin, on the contrary, now has only one room in which to live, and even his father, who is still alive, has nothing ; so both are forced to depend upon the charity of the man who was formerly so despised.”

Many omens are drawn from birds. For instance, should the mud bird, called *Etu*, be heard to cry in the night, “ *Fi-f, fi-f-f, fi-f-f-f,*” the people know that some misfortune is going to happen.

“ For some people it is a good sign if this bird crosses in front of them from left to right ; for others if it passes from right to left. It all depends upon whether a man’s son or daughter has been born first. If the first-born is a girl, then it is a sign of good fortune should the bird fly from left to right ; if a son, from right to left. People who have no children should watch and see for themselves which it is that brings them luck.

“ The bird builds a big nest at the top of a low tree. This looks like nothing so much as a shapeless heap of grasses, dead twigs, and water-weed washed into the branches at flood time, and left high and dry by the falling water. Thither *Etu* bears a few of the bitter-tasting palm-fruits, which some people like to eat with their *mimbo*. On moonless nights, he is said to drop down a fruit and listen to see whether it falls upon water or mud. If he hears, from the splash, that there is water beneath his nest, he keeps quite still ; but, if the sound tells him that the tide is low, he comes down at once to seek his prey—worms, small mud-fish, and such like.”

“ Should a dispute arise and one man accuse another of theft, a favourite way of settling the palaver, in olden days, was to choose out a hen which had laid many eggs. To her they told everything, setting the disputed object before her, while one said ‘ This is mine,’ and the other answered

‘No. It is mine.’ After this had been done, the hen was killed, and the man chosen as judge examined the immature eggs. If these were found to be black, judgment went against the accuser : if white, the case was settled in his favour.”

Many of the principal cults have their own method of divining ; but by far the most famous oracle among Ibibio is that of the great Idiong Secret Society, which will be described later.¹

¹ See p. 171.

CHAPTER VI

“ MAGIC ” PLAYS

MANY rites which, according to native ideas, come under the heading of “ magic ” would seem more properly to fall under that of conjuring tricks. To give a few examples, as described in the words of Abassi Ndiya :

“ There is so much magic in our town that medicine men who are strong in the knowledge of secret things can take a small babe from its mother, throw it into a fu-fu mortar, and beat it to pulp before the eyes of all the people. Only the mother is not allowed to look upon the sight, but is led far away into the bush, lest she should weep too much and so disturb the ceremony.

“ Next, three men are chosen out and bidden to stand before the mortar. To the first is given a little of the pulp to eat, to the second considerably more ; while the third man is made to swallow the rest, even to the last morsel.

“ When all is eaten the three move forward, facing the spectators, the one who ate the most standing in the middle. After a while they begin a dance, in the course of which the central figure pauses suddenly, and, extending his right leg, shakes it violently. Then, from out of his thigh, the babe appears to be reborn and is carried round for all men to see.”¹

The narrator added sadly that he had been told, could he but take this play to England, thousands of pounds would be paid for its production ; but, he continued, he feared that such things would not succeed there, “ because the climate is too cold ! ”

The “ play ” above described was being given in a large

¹ Similar “ magic ” is performed among the central Ibo.



MARKET-PLACE WHERE THE MAGIC PLAYS WERE HELD.

open space one day when we arrived unexpectedly at Ndiya. The performers stopped at once on our appearance, for, to use their own expression, they "done fear too much." We have an uneasy suspicion that, in all probability, they had distinct cause for anxiety; for, from a somewhat intimate knowledge of the methods of Ibibio "medicine" men, it would seem by no means impossible that *two* babes did not figure in the programme!

Another and even more gruesome "play" in great favour at the same town was described, in substance, as follows, by several people, including two chiefs, each of whom declared that he had seen it many times.

In the midst of the sunny market-place, surrounded by trees, under the shade of which close-packed crowds sit buying and selling, or come together from all the countryside to watch dance and play, a man is stationed with a friend on either hand. Before him stands another, chosen for his skill with the matchet. After making many passes in the air with this weapon, the juggler appears to strike off the head of the central figure. The trunk is then supported on either side by the two friends, who also fan the neck vigorously, so that no fly may be able to settle upon it: for they say that, should flies settle, the magic will be broken and the man can never return to life. Meanwhile, the seeming executioner is said to bear the head round the market-place, showing it to all the people. He then rushes back to the trunk, and carefully replaces the severed member, setting his own matchet in the right hand and another in the left. Thereupon the supposed corpse rushes round the market-place, waving both weapons and shouting gleefully: "Look upon me! You thought that I was dead, but see! I am alive again."¹

In spite of its attraction for them, the people are said to fear this play greatly, just as they would the sight of a real ghost.

After considerable difficulty, I succeeded in persuading a celebrated Juju man of the town to consent to arrange that the performance should be given in our presence. For an augmented sum, he even agreed to allow me to take

¹ This also is done by central Ibo adepts.

photographs of its various stages, as I had done during the Spider Play described on page 79. Unhappily, however, a few days before the date on which the performance was to be given, orders came for me to proceed to another District: thus the chance to obtain photographic records of this weird exhibition was lost.

This is unfortunate, as the accounts, independently given by each informant, tallied perfectly on all important points. That they were firmly convinced of the truth of their statements was beyond a doubt. It would, therefore, have been interesting to see whether the camera recorded clever juggling, or if these strange scenes were only dream-pictures hypnotically induced upon the minds of the onlookers. Should the latter prove to be the case, it would be doubly interesting, since it is stated that nothing at present known to European science could account for such a result. Another explanation is that a powerful medium is employed, in whose presence temporary materialisations can take place in the full light of day.

During most so-called "magic plays" there is a rule that men and women may not eat together, otherwise the spell would be broken: the dead could not be brought back to life, nor the wounded made whole. This tabu is enforced during the performance of another gruesome "play," which is watched with a mixture of awe and excitement by crowded audiences. The following account was given from three different sources, all of which tallied perfectly:

"When the people are gathered together in the marketplace, a man is set in their midst. Long palm-stems are cut and sharply pointed at one end, forming spear-like poles. These appear to be driven through the throat and lower part of the victim's trunk, so that they seem to pass through the body with the points sticking out beyond. Then the Juju priest calls upon the names of the man's father and grandfather, should these be dead, or more remote ancestors if the nearer kin are still alive. After this invocation, the palm-stems are withdrawn and carried round in order to show the people. The supposed victim, meanwhile, also walks round, in proof that he is none the worse for his adventure."

That such a trick, performed in the open, and with the fewest possible accessories, can impose as it does, time after time, upon hundreds of keen-eyed spectators, surely argues no small amount of skill on the part of the performers.

A third play given at Ndiya is that peculiar to the society called Udaw Akan, *i.e.* the Second-Born Excels. This performance can only take place in the neighbourhood of great cotton trees, and is therefore usually given in an open space in the town, between two of these giants. For this “play” a rope is stretched from the higher branches of two tall trees some hundred yards distant from one another, and kept as taut as may be by the efforts of many men. The “image,” in full paraphernalia, climbs up the one tree, then “dances” right across the rope and descends by the other.¹

At Henshaw Town, Calabar, a celebrated play is sometimes given at the time of the full moon. A single slender pole is fixed in the ground. Up this a man climbs till he reaches the top, when he stands on the point and dances, *i.e.* sways to and fro, rippling the muscles of back and waist, and waving his arms in the curious undulating movement usual among natives of these parts. After a while he climbs down head foremost, or springs from the top, turning two somersaults before reaching the ground.

Many Juju and Egbo men are clever ventriloquists. One “play” in which their powers are shown is called Ekkpo Akpara. In an open space, such as one of the “town playgrounds” or market-places, two long stout stakes are driven into the earth, forked or notched at the ends. Between them, from top to top, a long palm-stem is laid, and upon this a row of small fetishes are carefully balanced, one by one. Then tom-toms are beaten, at first slowly and softly, but with ever-increasing rhythm. “When the music grows loud and fast, the little idols begin to dance and talk with

¹ The minimum distance given by my informants was four hundred yards. Many insisted that the trees were usually even farther apart. Chief Henshaw, on reading through the account after it had been written down, said sadly and reproachfully: “You will wrong these people should you place the distance at less than four hundred yards!” Obviously, however, this is an exaggeration.

the voice of a man.¹ Eggs also can be made to speak in a similar manner."

Abassi of Ndiya states that he learnt this "play" and brought it to his country from Obio Iban Iban—the town of the women magicians described in another place.²

One of the most famous of these "marionette" plays, Akan by name, was given in our honour during our last visit to Awa—a water-side town, situated on the river of the same name, just before the entrance to the Magic Water described on p. 41. In this performance altogether twenty puppets took part, and while I secured as many snapshots as possible, my wife made hasty sketches of the principal characters. These consisted in grandfather, grandmother, father, mother, eldest son, eldest son's wife, second son and his wife, eldest daughter, her husband and "the beggar." The other nine performers were quite subsidiary personages.

In the wide sandy space surrounding the court-house, with its rough-hewn pillars and palm-leaf thatch, only a few yards from the fringe of low bush, broken here and there by palm trees, which surrounds the enclosure like a wall, a rough rectangle, some twenty feet long and six broad, had been marked out with posts. Over these blankets were stretched, carefully sewn together so as to form a little room, within which the manipulators could move unseen. In front stood three men, armed with brushes of palm fibre, with which they continually beat the screen of blankets, causing these to quiver, and thus hide any movement made by the real performers as they passed up and down behind. The practical purpose of this little piece of byplay was disguised from the credulous onlookers, hundreds of whom had gathered together from all the country-side, and sat in a dense half-circle on the sandy ground, by the pretext that it was part of the powerful

¹ Cf. the Ekoi doctor and the fetishes, which, though out of his reach, he could make dance (see *In the Shadow of the Bush*, p. 295), and the recent experiments in France, which seem to prove that certain people have the power of influencing objects without touching them, as well as the telekinetic phenomena at spiritualistic seances.

² D. Amaury Talbot, *Woman's Mysteries of a Primitive People*, p. 31 (Cassell).



MARIONETTES USED IN THE "AKAN" PLAY.

Broom Juju,¹ and necessary for the manifestation of the spirits of the play.

Up and down, in front of the spectators, danced three boys dressed as women, with many beads, long silk handkerchiefs, and strips of brightly coloured cloth knotted round the waist, in the manner of "Fattening-house" girls and Ebere women. These last-named form the only exclusively feminine guild of any importance which still survives among Ibibio, and perhaps the youths in feminine garb are another survival of the original predominance of feminism.

As each fresh mannikin appeared, a black cock was lifted up to touch it, in order, so it was explained, to confer upon it the power of speech and movement. The voices of the actual speakers were disguised by the use of a small tube made from corn-stalk covered with the membrane taken from beneath a bat's wing. Of plot there was none: each character delivered itself, either in monologue, or conversation with others, of topical remarks, or described matters of everyday occurrence in the lives of people such as these. The father, for instance, came upon the scenes during an animated discussion between his eldest son and daughter, his second son and the wife of the first. Shaking a wooden sword, he bade them all be silent, as he himself wished to sing. His ditty was doleful in the extreme, and mostly consisted of a recitation of matrimonial troubles. "Formerly," he chanted, "I had plenty yams. Now my wife has eaten them all and run away to another man."

At this point a pale, coffee-coloured figure sprang up, naked, but bearing some well-worn rags in his right hand. He pushed to the front, exclaiming, "After all, you are a chief and have something. I am the man who can justly claim the pity of our District Commissioner, because I have no good cloth." The "grandfather" next appeared, bearing a broom of palm fibre, to reprove the last speaker as a shameless beggar, and declare that he himself loved our party so much that he did not wish for gifts to any large amount, and would be satisfied even with a "dash" of three pence!

¹ P. Amaury Talbot, *In the Shadow of the Bush*, p. 81 (Heinemann, London; George Doran, New York).

After this interlude, obviously interpolated for our benefit, the greater number of the performers departed one by one, leaving the "father" and the eldest son's wife in possession of the scene. The latter was dressed in a scanty garb of beads and bells, supplemented only by a dark green cloth, well above the waist-line, tied in a loose knot over the right hip. In her hand was a paper fan, circular in shape and ornamented with the Stars and Stripes. In spite of flirtatious manner and provocative air, the personage above described, after regarding the male performer in silence for some seconds, addressed him in a tone of reproof.

"Why," said she, "do you thus excite yourself? I know that I am beautiful and attractive; but you must remember that I am not your wife. Neither am I such a woman as would condemn her man to death by giving herself up to another." The actions of the second performer were, unfortunately, unmistakably realistic.

The rest of the play is indescribable. I am happy to say that this is the only occasion on which we have encountered an instance of real vulgarity among primitive African peoples. Up till now, even when touching on subjects usually avoided by Europeans on account of difficulty of treatment, the perfect simplicity of manner and purpose with which such were mentioned or explained robbed them of possible offence. In this one case, most unfortunately, inexcusable and irrelevant coarseness showed itself, naked and unashamed, and we could not but wonder as to the influence to which the innovation was due.

Akan is a very celebrated Ibibio play, and, according to the testimony of many Awa people, was invented, like most of its kind, at Ibiaku, a few miles off. The history of this play was given as follows by Mr. Mathews, the Native Court clerk:¹

"When there had been 'war' between two towns," he said, "on the conclusion of peace, the vanquished side had to bring a certain play to perform before their erstwhile enemy. Next year, the victorious party brought another play to visit the conquered town.

¹ Since writing the above, we have heard, with great regret, that he died a few months after our departure.

"No woman may know the secret of how the dolls move and talk. Every night, for seven seasons, the play must be practised before it can be shown openly. Toward the close of the seventh, the performers come out and give notice to their fellow-townsmen: 'We are now going to play Akan by daylight.'"

There was grim cause for careful preparation, since in this, as in everything African, Tragedy walked close upon the heels of Comedy. When the "play" was taken to another town, should but one of the dolls chance to fall, so that the spectators could see, from its rude joints and pulleys, the way it was worked, the townsfolk at once surrounded the visitors, and either slew these on the spot for having revealed the secret to women, or, more frugally minded, killed the one by whose fault the misfortune had chanced, and sold the rest into slavery.

After the garishness and coarseness of the performance above described, we were quite unprepared for the beauty of that which was to follow. This was the so-called Utughu or Spider Play, which is stated to have been brought to this part of the world in quite recent times, from the Ibiaku. The latter are said to have learnt it from the Ibo, who are thought to have practised it from time immemorial. Even the name is said to be new, and given, quite understandably, from the fact that the figures carry out their strange play by means of cords, which, seen against the sky, are not unlike the threads of a spider's web. In teaching the play to the Ibibio, it was distinctly stated that the original name had been withheld, because it was not lawful to entrust this to strangers. A new one had therefore to be found for it. To our minds there could be little doubt that we were here privileged to witness a survival of one of the ancient Bird Dances.

First, a strangely bedizened, masked figure climbed up the pole on the left, then perched, in a brooding attitude, upon the log placed transversely across the forked end. On his head was a feathered head-dress. The mask was white, with raised black lines drawn across the forehead, much like the brows and beak of an owl, from which the connecting lines of our letter "M" are said to have been

derived. For a while he sat still, silent and gazing downward, brooding, as it were, from his perch in the sky over the abyss. Then slowly he raised a hand and let out the lower of the two strings which crossed above his head, so that it fell earthward in a slack V, after which he returned to his attitude of brooding. A little later the rope was pulled taut from beneath; then, slowly at first, but with increasing swiftness, a strange figure rose into view, flying upward, as if to meet her mate. The grotesqueness of her attire seemed in no way to lessen her weird loveliness or the grace of her movements; rather it seemed to accentuate both. She wore a mask, brightest gold in colour, which, from the distance, looked as though it might have come straight from some Egyptian tomb. Here were the same long almond-shaped eyes as those which gaze from old papyri or the walls of many a forgotten sepulchre, newly opened to the light of day, or such as are depicted on painted sarcophagi or the papyri of *The Book of the Dead*.

Save that a beak-like point was drawn over the forehead, beneath the feathered head-dress, there was no suggestion of bird traits. The features were small, and the expression strangely gentle and appealing, while the contours were soft and rounded. With arms outstretched, the lovely apparition floated upward; then, on reaching the brooding figure above, pressed her feet against the post, and, raising her head till it was slightly above his knees, waved the throat to and fro, much like a bird at breeding time. After a while she slipped backward a little. The male then rose, and, waving arms with a wing-like motion, slid after her till both reached the central point between the two posts. Here each drew feathers from amid their robes and strewed them upon the ground. As these fell through the air, they reminded one irresistibly of the story of old Mother Goose, so dear to childhood's days. A moment later, the bird-wife sank backward, sliding down the cord, and, when she had disappeared beneath, her mate returned to his perch on high.

Next the hen-bird flew upward, bearing a mirror in which the male surveyed himself for a long time, waving arms, undulating throat, and apparently preening, while all the



THE SACRED BIRD DANCE.

time his humble little mate lay upon the rope, gazing upward at her lord. After a while he gave back the hand-glass, and she slid with it out of sight once more, to return, first with a big umbrella, which he opened and held over him, and secondly with a folded paper, which looked from the outside like a great sheet of papyrus, but, when unrolled, proved to be one of the gaudy lithograph portraits of the King and Queen. After many graceful posturings, sometimes single, sometimes together, the lady bird retired, apparently not to return. Her mate waited for a while, then seeming to grow uneasy at the continued absence, bent forward as if in search. Next he slid a few feet along the rope, as though in pursuit, then caught at the cords above, and, after turning three somersaults over these, finally slid to earth and disappeared from view.

For several minutes nothing happened. Only posts and cords were to be seen, clearly silhouetted against the pure beauty of an early morning sky. Then into view once more, ecstatic, upward soaring, came the bird-wife. Higher and higher she mounted—arms extended, and mask touched to a new radiance by the glory of the sunlight, until her head was on a level with the empty perch. Then came a sudden pause, a gaze as of incredulity, and the whole lovely form shrank together, drooping, abandoned and alone. With a gesture infinitely pathetic, the frail arms crossed the breast; the weird loveliness of the head and upper body was lifted, bowing again and again as if in sad homage to the empty seat. Then, with arms outflung, in a gesture of superb abandonment and despair, the lithe figure fell backward and downward, till it reached the central point. Here the rope was drawn taut, the deserted mate gave an upward spring and caught the cords above. Five somersaults she turned on the twisted ropes, and then, amid wild applause, seemed to fling herself to earth—gliding down by the lower cord almost too rapidly for the eye to follow.

Throughout the play, though the ropes were plainly visible, the performance seemed independent of all such external aids; while the players appeared to float effortless as birds against the blue.

I have spoken of the loveliness of the gold-painted mask

worn by the bird-wife on this occasion. After the performance we wished to photograph and sketch it, as well as the other. On payment of the requested "dash," this was permitted, and our disillusionment may be imagined when the actual objects were laid in our hands. Carved from a solid block of wood, almost grotesque in outline, the whole glamour and beauty of the thing seemed to have disappeared as if by magic. Hardly could we be persuaded that these were the actual masks worn during the play. It was only after they had been replaced upon the heads of two of the performers, and the latter had moved a few yards away, that we saw they were, in very truth, the same.

Thinking over the difference, scarce believable save to those who had actually witnessed it, a memory wave brought to mind visions of masks worn in the dramas of old Greece. There, too, the conditions were not unlike. Given, as here, in the open—possibly also with a background of swaying palms—may not the glamour of air and sky have lent to these masks also, when seen from a distance, a beauty and aloofness which not only heightened the effect of the glorious text, but gave to the whole an atmosphere in which great men and women lived and acted greatly—far removed from the commonplaces of this workaday world?

Perhaps the surest claim which a Nigerian pagan can make upon the remembrance of posterity is to found a new cult or invent some new play. Much as with the names of benefactors mentioned in the "Bidding Prayer" at St. Mary's, Oxford, those of the founders of societies are always called aloud at every important celebration of the rites. That the idea of thus purchasing deathless fame, at the price of life, is not strange among people such as these, will be seen from the following account:

HOW THE PLAY AKA AKONG WAS BROUGHT TO EARTH FROM THE GHOST TOWN

Told by Udaw Owudumo of Ikot Atako

"Once an old man lay dying. He called to his son, Akpan Eyuk Uyo by name, and said: 'I have only one



"BIRD" MASKS

(Front and Side Views).



IBIBO (OGONI) MASKS AND MARIONETTES.

thing of value to bequeath, and that is my palm grove. This, therefore, is my dying gift to you. Tend the trees and enjoy the fruit, for now I must leave you.’ After saying this he died.

“When the funeral rites had been performed, the son set forth to visit his palm grove in order to cut down a cluster or two. When he reached the place, not a ripe nut was to be seen! Some one had been there before him and gathered them all! So he went sadly back and rang a bell round the town crying, ‘Who has cut my palm nuts?’ But no one answered, though the thefts continued steadily.

“One day, therefore, Akpan went toward the grove and hid in the bush near by. It was very hot, but he waited patiently, and at noontide saw a ghost creep forth from a hole in the ground. On his back the wraith bore a little bamboo frame, like those upon which dead men are borne to burial.

“When he stood upright in the sunshine, the ghost unfastened this, and laid it over the hole by which he had come, so as to hide the path to the Spirit World. Then he ran swiftly to a palm tree and began to climb. Akpan said nothing, but crept forward unseen, took the little frame and hid it carefully in the bush behind him.

“The ghost came back laden with a splendid cluster of palm nuts, gold, crimson, and orange. He ran swiftly toward the hole, but found his mat gone! There he stood in the brilliant sunlight, silent and pondering, because he could not understand this thing. Then he lifted up his voice and began to cry, with a strange high note unlike that of earth-folk.

“Suddenly he glanced round, and, because his eyes were very keen, saw Akpan hiding amid the branches. At once he asked: ‘Do you know who has taken my bamboo raft?’ Akpan answered, ‘No.’ Then the ghost said: ‘If you can find the man, I will give him whatsoever he may ask.’ Whereupon Akpan answered, ‘It is I.’

“The ghost questioned further: ‘Why did you take it?’ To which Akpan responded: ‘When my father died, he gave me the palm farm; but when I came to seek kernels I found that some one had been before me and stolen them,

The reason that I took your property was that I found you were the thief. Do you think that I am so foolish as not to know that you can never get back to the ghost town without your raft of bamboo ? ’

“ To this the wraith answered only : ‘ Give it back and I will tell you a word.’ But Akpan replied : ‘ First let me hear what you have to say. Afterwards I will give you the thing.’

“ The ghost said : ‘ It is not as you think. I have done no wrong. Your father wanted palm nuts, and sent me to cut them.’

“ Akpan asked : ‘ Where did you see my father ? ’ To which the ghost replied : ‘ He and I live together in one house, and if you wish to see him, I can take you thither.’

“ Akpan thought for a while, and at length said : ‘ Yes. I would see my father ; but one thing troubles me. If I go with you to the ghost realm, how shall I get back again ? ’

“ The wraith answered : ‘ I will give you a talisman, by which you will be able to find the way.’

“ On this, Akpan gave up the raft, and the ghost held out a bowl of water, dark but clear, in which he bade his companion wash his face ; and, after this had been done, said : ‘ Come with me.’ With that they climbed together down the hole.

“ Down and down they went through the darkness ; but at length a light was seen, glimmering at the end, like a little star. When they reached this, and stepped forth, they were in the ghost town, and lo ! the first person to greet them was the father of Akpan. ‘ How have you come here ? ’ he asked his son, and the latter answered : ‘ It is this ghost who has brought me.’ Then the father led the way to the house where he dwelt, and set meat and drink before them. When they had finished, he said to his son : ‘ I must leave you for a while, because there is a very fine play in the town to-day, which I would not miss.’

“ The son answered : ‘ I should like to see this play, too.’ But the father replied : ‘ That must not be, for should you see it, you would certainly describe it to the earth-folk when you go back ; and, the day on which you speak of it, you would surely die.’

“Akpan said : ‘Let me see it. I will not tell any one.’ So he was allowed to go and look on.

“When all was over and the wraiths had gone to their homes, the son said that he was ready to go back to earth again, but the father answered : ‘Wait a bit. I will first show you something.’

“On that the old man took the youth by the hand, and showed him some leaves, saying : ‘Without a gift you shall not depart. Take these leaves, therefore, and when you are among the earth-folk, and would go to the market-place, put one in your mouth. Then, when you walk up and down among the stalls, and your eye falls upon anything which you desire, say only : “Would that this thing were mine !” Then, when you reach home again you will find it there ; but about the play you have seen, mention it to none, lest you die that same day.’

“When Akpan got back, he did as his father had said, and, in time, waxed very rich by means of the magic leaves. Whatever he wished for came to him, so that all the people wondered how he got such great possessions. Many of his friends went to him and said : ‘Tell us what you have done to grow so rich.’ He never answered them, but sat silent in his house, thinking upon the beautiful play which he had seen in the ghost town.

“After some time he sent out to buy many jars of palm wine. Then he called all the townspeople together and said : ‘There is a play, fine beyond all those known to the earth-folk, which I would show you ; but when I show it, I know that I must die. Therefore if I teach you the dance and the mystery thereof, you must not fail to call my name whenever you play this play from now on for evermore.’

“Then the men answered : ‘It shall be as you say. Only let us see this dance, the like of which was never before witnessed by earth-folk, in sunshine or moonlight.’ So Akpan stood forth before them and showed how they must dress and how move ; and all the people learnt it from him.

“That same day he died.”

“The play was called Aka Akong, and people still play it in far-away bush towns. The sound of it is very sweet,

and the feet of the dancers fall lightly, as if hardly needing to touch the ground. Before the first stroke of the tom-tom, however, and before the first foot moves or arm waves, they call aloud the name of Akpan Etuk Uyo, for he it was who brought it from the ghost town and taught its mysteries to the children of men."

CHAPTER VII

AFFINITIES AND WERE-BEASTS

THE idea that the soul of man or woman has the power to leave its human form and enter into that of its "affinity," or appear in the shape of a were-beast, is as firmly held among these people as was our childhood's faith that the soul passed at death into the body of a winged angel. Countless persons are ready to swear to cases of metamorphosis which, they declare, have come under their own observation, and are as unshaken in this belief as was Benvenuto Cellini in the existence of the salamander sporting in his grandfather's fire.

Perhaps only those who have lived among peoples where these beliefs are but commonplace, and have saturated themselves with the environment in which this idea of a mysterious link with the jungle folk seems but natural, can understand the attitude of mind which has evolved such a faith¹—though it is only a few hundred years ago when the existence of were-animals was commonly credited throughout Europe.

The means by which a human being can consciously send forth his soul to enter the body of—or rather, in most cases, to materialise as—an animal or vegetable affinity, have been described at some length in a former book.² The Ibibio have a nearly identical method. They believe that every man possesses three souls or spiritual bodies, viz.

¹ It may perhaps be possible that this belief has arisen from the ability of some powerful mediums—and there is some reason to think that spiritualistic phenomena occur in a very developed form among these tribes—to send out ectoplasm bodies.

² *In the Shadow of the Bush* (Heinemann, London; George Doran, New York).

(1) the ethereal or astral, which roughly corresponds to the Egyptian Ka and perishes after death, (2) the soul or individuality, which resembles the Egyptian Ba, survives the body and inhabits the world of ghosts between incarnations, and (3) the immortal spirit or true Ego, somewhat like the Egyptian Khu, which always stays with God. The first two, along with the physical body, would appear to be emanations of the last.

In some regions it is thought that the ethereal soul belonging to a man is, at the latter's birth, projected into a real tree or animal, or is born in the shape of one, remains in such during the man's lifetime, and dies simultaneously with him. Most Ibibio, however, including the Efik and the majority of those in Eket District, are of opinion that this "bush-soul," as it is called, "lives in a man's belly" save at such times as it is consciously sent forth—usually during sleep. In this case the way to send out the Ukponn-Ikott (Bush-Soul)—or Ukponn-Mmong (Water-Soul) if it turns into a water animal—is, among some peoples, only shown to the son of a chief or a man who has paid the fees and reached a high position in one of the secret societies, especially the Ekkpe (Leopard) Club.

Such a man is initiated into the mystery by one of the old men, who makes a medicine composed of a mixture of leaves, eggs, water, etc., in a calabash. Often he is taught how to project his soul in the form of a bird, which can fly fast and see what is happening in a far country; sometimes how to "possess" at the same time a crocodile, a cray-fish and a small fish, into any of which he can turn at will.

The power of metamorphosis is generally termed Uworrrow-Ukponn, corresponding to the Ibo word Ehihi, and is sometimes inherited, sometimes bought. Since many believe that it is only used for evil purposes, the faculty is not often boasted of, or admitted, by its possessor. Nearly all "strong" animals in the bush, such as leopards, elephants, etc., are credited with being were-beasts, but such can only be recognised by hunters, who, unless bad men, would not shoot them, since their death would entail that of their affinity.

Among Eket, snake "affinities" predominate over all others, though many women say that their souls go forth and enter the great fish in the rivers. A man named Ikot of Usun Inyan gave the following account to Mr. Eakin :

"I was sitting, with others, in the verandah of my house, when one of the company suddenly jumped up, crying out that his soul was caught in a trap on the farm of a man whom he named. He had the appearance of struggling violently, as though seeking to loose himself, and begged some of those present to go to the place indicated and set free his affinity. Several of the spectators ran to do as he asked, while I stayed by him, to see what would happen. In a short time he quieted down, and said, with an appearance of great relief : ' Now I am free once more. My soul has come back to me.'

"Not long afterwards our friends returned, and said :

" ' We went to the place pointed out to us, and there found a great python (Asaba) caught in a trap. So we cut the ropes and the snake glided forth into the bush.' "

There are said to be two kinds of Asaba, or snake-souls. In one case the "affinity" is hereditary and totemistic, and in the other acquired from a magician. Large sums are paid to powerful Juju men in order to induce them to perform the rites which will enable the aspirant to enter at will into python form. The reason that this "affinity" is specially sought after is that such serpents are looked upon as guarding the mysteries of sacred groves and waters, and the secrets of long-forgotten, buried treasures. To these it is thought that were-pythons can procure access, and so bring riches.

Such ideas are world-wide. Only to white peoples, and in modern times, is the snake a thing of unmixed dread. Among Red Indians the "serpent folk" are still regarded as "elder brothers." For the ancient Egyptians, they were the guardians of tomb, treasure-house and granary floor—the symbols of Wisdom and Eternity. To Roman and Greek the serpents of Aesculapius were the sign of healing. The Sacred Cobra spread its hood shelteringly over the head of the sleeping Buddha ; while, in the India of to-day, old cobras, grown white with age-long watching

over the forgotten treasures of dead kings, play as great a part in the rude tales of the jungle folk as in the charmed pages of Rudyard Kipling, to whose *Jungle Books* we owe so deep a debt of gratitude.

It is said that the greatest caution must be exercised in choosing the wizard by whom the necessary rites for entering into the python affinity are to be performed. Should one go to a magician of evil mind, or who, for any reason, harbours a grudge against the applicant, instead of selling him the male Asaba Juju, the name of which is Kukubarakpa, he will give the feminine one. Among other rites, first the swallowing of a large bolus is obligatory. In shape this is much like a small edition of the pad which carriers wear on their heads, beneath their loads, and upon this rests the snake after it has been metamorphosed by magic from a thread, seven fathoms long, which the unfortunate man is made to swallow. Should this support not have been provided, it is said that the snake would press directly against the body of the purchaser, and so cause his death. If the witch-doctor is led by evil will to insert the female, instead of the male, part of the Juju, woe betide the recipient ! For no sooner does the snake find herself within him, than she proceeds to lay eggs. Then the wretched man swells and swells, until all the townsfolk can see what has happened.

“ O, oh, ho ! ” cry they, pointing him out to one another. “ Behold ! Such an one has sought to buy the male serpent, but he went to a wizard of evil mind, and the mother-snake has entered his body to torment him ! Let us beware of him, therefore, for, very surely, he is a man of ill-will ! ”

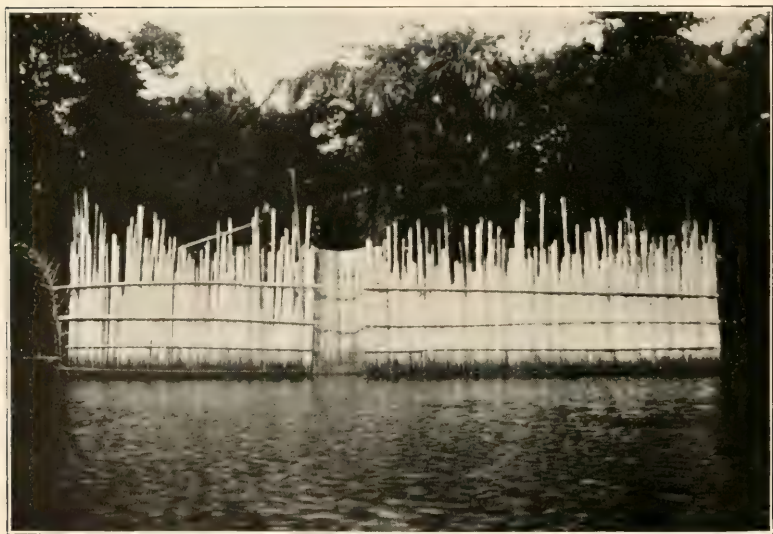
Snake souls may usually be known by having a skin which peels off, a long neck and jaw, and, most unpleasant attribute, foetid breath. Sade, a labourer employed by Chief Henshaw, was given as an instance of this affinity.

The origin of the greatest of all Asaba Jujus, that of Kukubarakpa, shows totemistic traces, and is almost identical with the story of the Sacred Crocodile of Idua Asang. The tale was thus related :

“ Two towns, which lay on either side of a narrow creek, had long been on unfriendly terms. After a while the



SITU. (See p. 94.)



FISH TRAP.

(In which the soul of Esiet Idung was caught in the form of a fish.)

inhabitants of one of these crossed over at low tide and attacked the other, thinking to gain an easy victory. Instead of this, after hard fighting, they themselves were driven back to the edge of the water, which had, meanwhile, risen so that they were cut off from escape. Now, in the creek lived a great python named Kukubarakpa, and no sooner did he see the plight of the invaders than he laid himself bridge-wise across the water—his head on the one bank and his tail upon the other. Over his body fled the vanquished, and, when all were safely landed on the farther shore, the bravest of the victors tried to follow. Kuku-barakpa waited until these were crossing over his body, then sank suddenly, dragging them down with him, so that all were drowned. In gratitude, none of the people whose ancestors were thus saved kill or eat python to this day.”

Not long ago a man of Usun Inyan town asserted that his wife, Esiet Idung by name, had told him that her soul sometimes left her and went to dwell in the body of a fish in the Kwa Ibo River. One day she came to her husband, crying: “I am caught! I am caught, and must die! for a fisherman has snared my soul in his trap by the water-side. Go therefore to the place of which I shall tell you and release me before it is too late; for should the man come and kill my affinity, I must die also.”

On this, in all haste, the husband took a canoe and went with his friends to the trap which his wife had described. They opened the door and let all the fish swim out into the river. Among the others they noticed one of great size, which plunged eagerly out into the current. On their return they found that the woman had recovered; but all believe that, had the fish been killed, she must have perished also.

So firmly is this belief in fish affinities held among Eket women that, when other Ibibio have had a specially good catch and carry fine specimens of smoked fish to market, the former are known to burst into bitter tears at the sight, weeping and wailing, “You have slain our kin.”¹

¹ Possibly in this belief some likeness may be traced to the root idea, beneath the Syrian myth, that Derceto, the mother of Semiramis, was changed into a fish.

Amid the Eket, unlike their neighbours, the Ubium, fish affinities seem to be exclusively feminine. At least no case of a male fish-soul has come to my knowledge from this part of the District.

Another Eket woman of Usun Inyan, the sister of the "Fish-soul" above described, believes that the spirit of a wild boar occasionally enters into her body. At such times she becomes so possessed by the affinity that it is said to be impossible to hold her. Superhuman strength seems to flow into her, and she is reported to bound from the ground as though she would spring to the very roof. The only way of quieting her is to send for a man of the same town, known to belong to the wild boar totem. He has but to enter the house and lay his hand, though never so lightly, upon the afflicted woman, and she at once quiets down and returns to her normal state.

Chief Henshaw declares that two kinds of wild-boar souls are known to exist. The first is the common sort called *Edi Ikott*, of which affinity the above-mentioned woman may be cited as typical. Old hunters tell, with bated breath, of another, the 'Ndaw *Edi*, which they fear to shoot, lest they should be killed by the herd.

"Among every thousand or so of bush pig," they say, "one is to be found, of great size and very splendid, with a skin marked like that of a leopard." When Chief Henshaw was a boy, he declares that such an one was killed on his father's plantation, and that he himself saw it, "with these very eyes." Such animals, so hunters state, are the kings of the bush pig. "They are never allowed to walk at all, but are carried everywhere by those of the common sort. On the rare occasions when such have been shot, their feet were found to be white and tender, which proves that this statement is true! Never do they seek for their own chop. This is brought by the lesser pigs, at dawn and evening-time, to a place made ready in the depths of the bush, where fresh leaves have been strewn, up and down, for a bed. Each year the King Boar is carried away to a new place amid very thick bush, so that the hunters should never find him. No least spot of mud must be allowed

to touch him, at any time, for these rare and mighty beasts cannot abide any foul thing ! ”

Just as the 'Ndaw Edi themselves are said to exist only in the proportion of about one to a thousand, so their human affinities are rare in the extreme. Only one case of such was brought to my notice—a woman of Idua Oronn, who claimed to be of the Kind Boar totem, and, in consequence, at certain periods of the year, refused to set foot to ground, lest her sole should be soiled thereby.

At such times, when she sallies forth, the people run before her, spreading mats from which they are careful to wipe every speck of sand. “ Even when passing over so carefully prepared a way, should her eye fall upon mud or any foul thing, she would check her steps, and, drawing back her foot, stand hesitating, in the manner of a cat that will not wet its feet, until the offending sight had been covered or removed. Down to the water-side she passed, then dived a bit, and came out again, restored to her usual state, but lifting feet and hands very daintily ! ”

In the same town there lives a Juju man of most evil reputation, who is credited with the power of sending out his soul into a crocodile, and, in this shape, to be in the habit of lying on the little beach just below the Rest House, when Government officials of any importance are staying there. He is said to do this in order to listen, in case report of his ill-deeds is brought to their ears. Should such a thing happen, he goes into hiding until the matter has blown over, and is stated to have thus often evaded punishment.

Should anything happen to cause him more than ordinary annoyance, he is thought to avenge himself in a terrible way. Some eight years ago he was incensed against Government, and especially against the Political Agent, on account of restraints placed in the way of his evil deeds. As a result, so it is said, he lay in wait, in crocodile form, upon the little beach, until one of Chief Henshaw's boys went down to bathe. At once the cruel jaws opened, and, to the horror of his companions, the unfortunate lad was dragged beneath the surface.

Now a motor slip has been constructed over part of the beach, and a wharf built out on the other side, the Rest

House standing above and between the two. One September evening we were sitting on the verandah, listening to the interesting accounts of our guest, a French officer lately arrived from Morocco, where he had passed through seventeen engagements without so much as a scratch. Ten o'clock struck, and the visitor rose to go, when suddenly a horrible cry rang out from the stillness. Seizing any lamp which came to hand, we tore down the steep slope, urged on by screams, high-pitched and awful, evidently those of a man overtaken by dreadful terror and anguish. Just before the slip was reached, these stopped, as suddenly as they had arisen. The water beneath was flecked with patches of dull froth, as if churned, while one or two eddies were still to be seen, marking the place where the unfortunate man had been dragged under. On the cement edge lay a leather belt, that on which Situ, our Yoruba steward, always carried the keys of those boxes with which he was entrusted. Nets were got out without delay, while canoes full of men beat up and down the river, on the chance that the reptile might rise for a moment, or abandon his prey. All to no purpose. Our utmost efforts failed to find trace of the man who, for four years, had followed us in all our journeyings, and whom the foul, evil-smelling creature had seized, in an unguarded moment, and dragged down to a terrible fate, almost within reach of the hands so eagerly stretched out to save him.

Of the kindness and genuine good feeling shown by all on this sad occasion, I have no words in which to express adequate acknowledgment. From our French guest, the agents of the European factories, several of whom were aroused from sleep, and Chief Henshaw, called from the enjoyment of his new gramophone records, down to the smallest "cook's mate" or "boy's boy," each thought only how to exert himself to the uttermost if but something might be done to save the life reft from us with such appalling suddenness.

Situ was a splendid type of Yoruba, over six feet in height, of refined features and unusual intelligence and initiative; brave, cheerful and faithful under all the trying circumstances which we had experienced together.

Strange to say, only the day before, we had been warned that the "crocodile man" was angered on account of a land palaver. He had been heard to mutter that it would be well for those in any way connected with Government to avoid the river-banks after sunset. All the people round, therefore, held him responsible for Situ's tragic end.

Exactly seven days later, on September 14, it was reported that a police constable named Okon Eduk was dragged down from Queen's Beach at Calabar. Next night another policeman was mounting guard at the same place, when he saw two crocodiles coming as if to seize him. A chief, long known as a crocodile affinity, was suspected of the deed, because, according to the testimony of a witness, he had quarrelled with the dead man the day before, and said to him: "Wait. I am going to hide you. Fire will burn your head, and after two days' time you will never see the white sky again."¹

Many people, however, assert that the crocodiles concerned in this case were not were-beasts, but members of the dreaded "Human Alligator" Society, a sister cult of the well-known "Leopard Society" of Sierra Leone.

Not long after we had left Idua Oronn, the following telegram came from the native official in charge of the station:

"Since your departure, a very large alligator² has been always seen underneath the Customs wharf, and has made several attempts to carry people away. Can you please arrange for a policeman to guard with gun and cartridges on the wharf?"

Although "guardianship of crocodiles" is no part of the duty laid down in the regulations of the Southern Nigerian police force, a constable was despatched for the protection of the Oronn, but without avail. I am glad, however, to be able to say that the beast held responsible for the death

¹ So far as my experience goes, the adjective *blue* is not applied to the sky by West Coast natives. By all those whom we have had the privilege of studying, the vault of heaven is spoken of as *white*.

² Crocodiles are almost invariably spoken of as alligators by English-speaking natives, though none of the latter exist in this region. In the same way *leopard* becomes *tiger* in West Coast phraseology.

of Situ fell to my rifle on the last night before we left the District.

Local opinion has credited me with the destruction of yet another crocodile "affinity"; but, as were-crocodiles are objects of special dread and hatred, no ill-will has been caused by either deed, the latter of which came about as follows:

Once, when paddling down the Cross River, my attention was called to an unusually large crocodile lying on one of the little beaches. This was pointed out as a notoriously bad character, which had been in the habit of raiding water-side farms and dwellings in search of dogs and poultry. Among other victims he had pursued a puppy brought out some time before by the Oronn Mission. So unusually daring were his depredations that the neighbouring peoples had decided he was no ordinary reptile, but one possessed by the soul of a man; because, as they said, "Only such an one would be so bold." On this occasion the paddlers begged me to shoot and I did so. As a result, the great beast sprang upward, beating the air with all four legs, then sank like a stone.

A few days later a chief of Idua Asang, well known throughout the country-side as a "crocodile affinity," died, and the great reptile has never since been seen. To the minds of people such as Ibibio these facts seem to afford positive proof that the Chief's soul was in the body of the crocodile which I shot, and which sank into the river to die, its death entailing that of the human being with whom it was mysteriously linked.

It is considered difficult to shoot a were-crocodile, as he is usually attended by the Osari bird, which remains on the watch and warns him of the approach of a hunter.

When a "crocodile man" dies, the creature in which his bush soul used to dwell is said to creep on shore, where it wanders round, dazed and senseless, seeking its lost human "affinity." Then those who meet it call to one another:

Enyene unam emi akpa,
Man animal this die,

Modo ukponn essie ofumde.
Therefore soul his wandering.

With that they fall upon the helpless brute and send its spirit to the ghost kingdom, perhaps there—who knows?—once more to join its human affinity.

Chief Daniel Henshaw told us many stories of such were-creatures, among others the following, which came within his own experience :

Once, when on a trading expedition up the Akwa Yafe River, the morning meal had just been finished and a little girl was leaning over the end of the canoe washing a silver spoon. Suddenly she gave a cry and let the spoon fall into the water. They backed the boat and tried to find it, but the river was deep, and nothing was to be seen, save a crocodile swimming off into the shadow of a fallen tree-trunk near the bank.

On landing at a town, some seven miles distant, one of the chiefs of the place stepped forward and smilingly presented to the visitors a spoon of identical shape and pattern, saying : “ Will you not accept this and come and eat at my house ? ”

The newcomer was angry and drove him off, crying, “ Go away ! You are bad people here. I will have nothing to do with ‘ crocodile men ’ such as you.” With that the party got back into their canoes and went on to another town farther up stream.

On the beach, just below the Rest House at Jamestown, the son of one of the head-men of Ibut 'Ntung, a little fishing settlement near by, was strolling one evening when a crocodile, hiding in the bush which screened a strip of marsh, knocked him down with a blow of its head. The boy cried out, “ Crocodile has got me.” At once his father and most of the neighbours rushed to his help, but only to see him dragged under. Three months later, at low tide, some fisherfolk were passing a sand-bank near the opposite shore. There, they assert, they saw the body of the lost boy, lying upon a ridge of sand, quite fresh and as if but newly killed. They stated that there was no water in the body, such as is always found in those who have met death by drowning. The only mark of injury was a spot of blood beneath the nostrils. In September 1913 a boy was said to have died at Adiabo under similar circumstances.

Both among Efik and Ibibio the mystery is explained in the following manner :

“ Crocodile men,” it is said, “ fear to eat their victims at once, because the friends of those carried off throw Juju after Juju into the water, calling upon the name of the spirit and begging that the man, whose soul is in the animal which has killed their dear ones, should be utterly destroyed. Instead, therefore, of feasting upon his prey, the crocodile bears his victim, as quickly as may be, down to a house beneath the river, there to be revived by magic rites and kept as a slave, until the friends have grown weary of calling upon the Juju, after which the unfortunate captive may be devoured in safety. Should the crocodile soul, however, have reason to think that people suspect him of the crime, he destroys his victim as quickly as may be, lest, by the power of one of the three great Jujus to which appeal is usually made in such cases, the relatives should be directed to the magic house beneath the water, and the prisoner released by a power greater than any of his.”

In olden days when a man was suspected of having brought about the death of another in such a manner, he was taken before one of these Jujus—the Ekoi *Animm*,¹ *Ndemm Ibum*, the shrine of which was on the bank of the Cross River, or *Anamfa*, at Idua Oronn. In the case of the policeman said to have been seized by the crocodile man at Calabar, the chiefs asked and obtained, from the Provincial Commissioner, permission to consult the oracle once more.

So far as could be learned, there is only one kind of medicine, Ibokk Ibakpa by name, which is so strong as to give protection both from real and were-crocodiles. A trader at Urua Eye knows the secret of the ingredients, and this knowledge has made him rich. Two or three different kinds of magic leaves are crushed together and mixed with powdered bark and roots. After a man has bought some of this, he always keeps it by him in the canoe ; then, when he sees a crocodile swimming in the water, or lying on mud or sand, he takes some in his hand and manœuvres until he is in such a position that the breeze will carry

¹ *In the Shadow of the Bush*, pp. 93, 50, etc.

the scent of it towards his prey. The magic takes effect at once; the beast cannot turn or attempt to get away, and only lies or floats like a log. One thing, however, must be remembered; that is, never to call the beast *Mfion* (crocodile) but only *Unam* (animal). So long as this prohibition is regarded, the canoe can be taken close up to the ill-smelling creature, which can then be seized and carried off in safety. He cannot move to harm any one. Many fisher-folk have this "medicine" rubbed into cuts, purposely made in their bodies, so that they may never be without it, in case the canoe capsized or some accident caused them to fall into the water, in which event there would be no time to seize the protective medicine from out the box in which it was stored.

With regard to the prohibition as to calling a crocodile by its usual name, it is interesting to note that, according to Skeat, there is a regular tabu language used by Malay fishermen, of which the following are examples:

Fish: *Daun kayu* (tree leaves) or *Sampah laut* (jetsam).

Snake: *Akar kidup* (living creeper)—exactly like the Efik "bush-rope."

Crocodile: *Batang kayu* (tree log).¹

To come nearer home, Scottish and English fishermen, too, believe that salmon, seal, and other denizens of the water have a similar objection to being called by name, but do not in the least mind being referred to as "the red fish," "the bald beast," or "the queer fellow."²

In all probability the Malay name, "tree-log," was given not only as an euphemism, but also because it so exactly describes the appearance of these dreaded monsters. Both Efik and other Ibibio say that, when old tree-trunks float down a river, crocodiles are sure to follow, because such logs resemble them and therefore lull suspicion.

An instance, in seeming support of this belief, came within our own experience, and is perhaps worth mentioning. Two nights before Situ's tragic death, a great tree-trunk, covered with grass and creepers, was borne down

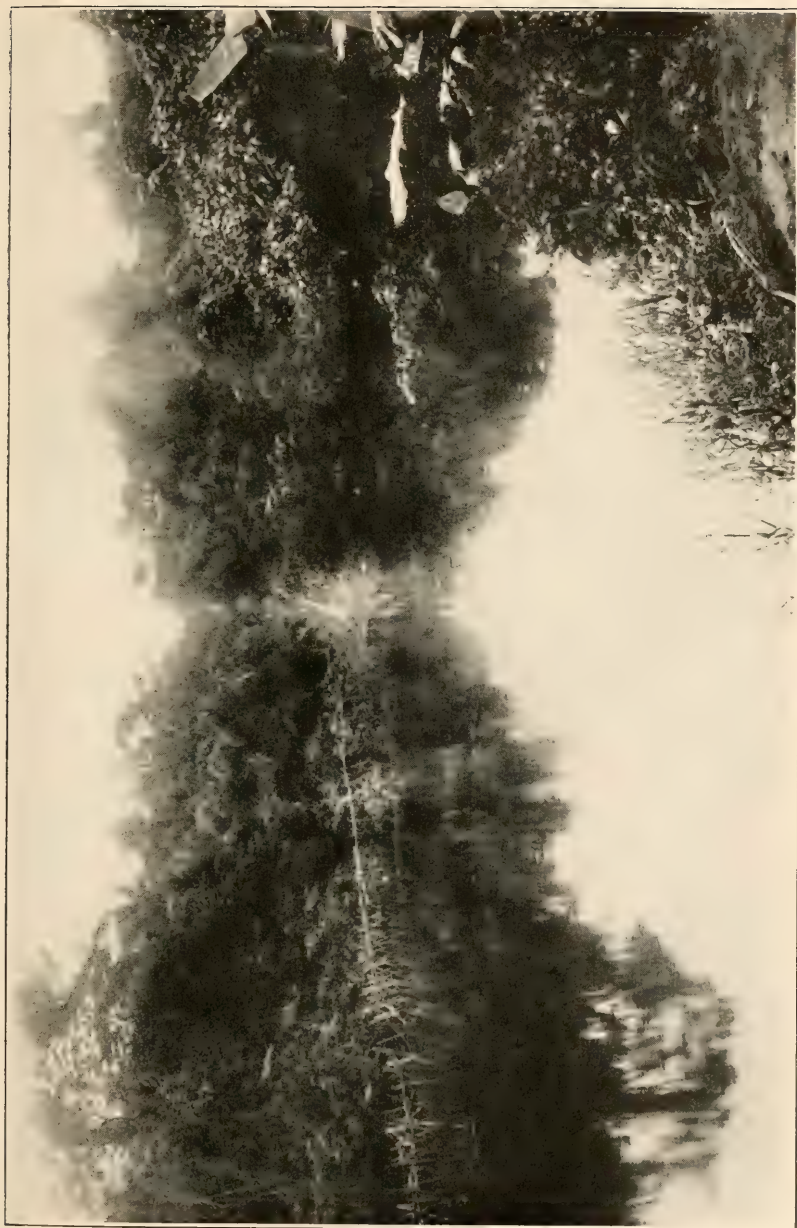
¹ *Malay Magic*, p. 315.

² For a full account of this strange tabu see Sir J. G. Frazer, *Taboo and the Perils of the Soul*, p. 392 et seq.

on the ebb tide and stranded on the beach before the Rest House at Idua Oronn. Next day the flood tide carried it up stream again, into the mouth of the Uya-Oronn River, thence on and on, to a point where a fallen mangrove tree, of magnificent girth, stretched far out into the current. Caught on the one side in the terminal branches of this, and on the other firmly wedged into the farther bank, the great weed-grown trunk had fixed itself across, effectively barring the river just beyond a sharp bend, where the water swerved suddenly between walls of high bush. Round this elbow-like curve came our canoe, propelled by some dozen paddlers, to dash, almost full tilt, into the unexpected obstacle. It was only with difficulty kept from capsizing, and as the water was over twenty feet deep at this point, the current running like a mill race, and the place well known as a haunt of crocodiles, the adventure was more exciting than pleasant. It was most fortunate, however, that the barrier had considerably placed itself across our path by daylight, rather than on the only other occasion on which we had passed down the creek. This had been two evenings earlier, when press of work had detained me till nightfall, and we crossed over the very spot in darkness so intense that even in mid-stream it was hardly possible to see one's hand before one's face.

The second time we managed to pass by through climbing on to the mangrove trunk, and thence lifting the canoe bodily over the barrier. In this rather difficult operation our poor Situ distinguished himself, as usual, by energy and courage. Next evening the trunk was again borne down by the tide and, once more, found a resting-place upon the little beach, followed, so natives assert, by the crocodile, which, a few hours later, seized Situ.

Mr. Dayrell, a District Commissioner of Southern Nigeria, and the author of *Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria*, with whom we once had the pleasure of travelling to England, told us that he had come across a chief of Okuni, Tatterbong by name, who was immune, together with all his family, from danger by crocodiles. It is stated, though our informant did not himself testify to this, that any member of this chief's family could swim close to the Okuni sacred crocodile



UYA-ORONN CREEK.

and scratch its back. The chief died about nine years ago, and shortly afterwards the reptile disappeared and has never since been seen.

A case which came up before the Native Court at Idua Oronn is concerned with this belief in crocodile "affinities." In it a man named Ekpe Esien stated on oath :

" I had some ' palaver ' with Antikka Esuk. While we were quarrelling he said to me : ' You have killed Edem Edan and Owo Esuk in your crocodile form, and you think that people do not know about it.' "

In reply to this charge Antikka Esuk stated :

" When I quarrelled with prosecutor he said to me : ' You are a man who eats sacrifices upon the road as your father did.' By this he meant that my father was a wizard. Further he said : ' If you are not careful, I shall cover you as I did your father.' Another time he said : ' Look ! Here is my Juju. If you do not take care it will kill you as it did your father. You killed my daughters, Ukoyo and Ikwi, by your witchcraft, and you want to kill all the townsfolk as your father did.' It was because of this that I said to him that he himself had killed two men while in crocodile form."

CHAPTER VIII

AFFINITIES AND WERE-BEASTS (*continued*)

UNLIKE the sinister beings suspected of sending forth their souls in crocodile or python shape, no stigma seems to rest on those thought capable of assuming bird-form, nor on those whose spirits are linked with the powers of vegetation, dwelling in great trees, lianes, or climbing palms.

Should a branch fall from some tree which is thought to be tenanted by the soul of a man, the chiefs of the town gather together, and, after covering over the broken end with a cloth, offer sacrifice, that he whose "Bush-Soul" dwells within may not die.

Here and there, among the natives of this region, some are found with a skin so vividly red that it is difficult to believe, as far as colour is concerned, that they are of negro rather than Red Indian blood. One evening, just as the sun was sinking, we were sitting in the kiosk of the Rest House at Ikotobo, watching a stream of men and women returning from farm work. The rays of the setting sun fell upon one of these, turning her red skin to positive scarlet, so that she seemed all aflame. Natives explain the peculiarity by saying that such red men and women are "Children of the camwood tree." This tree is their affinity, and when set free, their spirits enter trunk or branches, just as others go forth from their human bodies to inhabit those of animal denizens of bush or river. To this totem belongs Chief Inyang of Ikot Imaw near Ndiya.

In mentioning these sons and daughters of the red-timbered camwood, it is interesting to remember that the great st living Africanist, Sir Harry Johnston, refers to widespread traditions that, before the Bantu invasion, West Africa

was peopled by a dwarfish race sometimes referred to as red men.”¹

To the silk-cotton tree, or *Okum*, “affinity,” only chiefs or the sons and daughters of chiefs can belong. The mother of David Ekong of Ibeno, head wife of the Chief Priest of the great Juju Ainyena, claimed to be of this totem, and, in consequence, was called by the name *Okum*. When a chief has entered into such an affinity, he usually sets a strong fence about his “Soul-tree,” so that nothing may come near to harm it. Sometimes, too, such “*Okum*” men make a great magic, by which the souls of their wives and children are drawn into neighbouring trees.

Chief Awkonnor of Ikotobo is said to be the affinity of the Awkonnor tree, which, among Ekoi and Ibibio, may always be found planted by places of sacrifice. By some it is held that, beneath its shadow, witches creep to weave their evil spells. Thither, too, come wronged wives and barren women, to call down punishment upon the husbands by whom they have been harshly treated.

On account of the age to which this tree endures, together with its striking appearance, it is much in use for the marking out of boundaries: the more so that possibly its supposed magical properties are of themselves held instrumental in carrying out the curse, pronounced of old, upon the man who should remove his neighbours’ landmarks.

The soul of another Ikotobo chief dwells in a great tree near one of the town playgrounds. As a sign of this mystic connection, and to ward off evil influences, a long wooden haft with a piece of iron lashed to the top is always set against the trunk.

Many chiefs, in whose family the Tree Totem is not hereditary, seek to buy entrance into this affinity, because it is supposed to confer long life, power and virility beyond the lot of ordinary mortals. Not for lifetime only, but as long as the tree endures, this strange link is thought to hold. After a “Tree-Soul” has quitted its human body and passed into the realm of ghosts, it is still deemed capable of entering its affinity, and thence, by means of rustling leaves or waving boughs, communicating with those of its earthly

¹ *A Survey of the Ethnography of Africa.*

brethren, who come to seek advice or help. One such oracle may be found in a climbing palm which grows by an enchanted water near Idua Eket. In this dwells the soul of the head chief's mother, and thither he bears offerings twice a year, at harvest time, and the planting of new farms.

On one occasion when Chief Henshaw and some of the principal members of his family were trading in the German Cameroons, they passed a tree by the river-side, on an outstanding branch of which sat a great white egret. In passing, two men shot at it from the canoe, but the bird remained unharmed. Then a friend, who accompanied them and had the reputation of being an excellent marksman, fired, but with no result. So astonished was he at his failure to hit at such easy range, that he cried to his companions: "Shoot no more; for this is no true bird, but one in which dwells the soul of a man, who possesses a strong Juju, before which our guns are powerless."

After this, the party refrained from shooting, though the bird flew tantalisingly in front of them, and only disappeared a short time before their destination was reached.

On nearing the beach of the little town, the head chief came down to meet them. "Welcome," he said in salutation, "I am glad to see you, and am well pleased with the goods you have brought, especially with such and such"—naming several, the appearance of which he proceeded minutely to describe.

All were astonished, since the things were not yet unpacked, and none but those in the boats knew what the owner had chosen to bring on this journey.

"How do you know what I have brought?" asked the leader of the party.

The chief laughed: "You were looking over your goods and discussing their price a while ago," he answered. "Have you forgotten the white bird at which you shot three times, but could not harm? My soul was in the bird, and through its eyes I was able to look down and see all that you had in the canoe."

Those who belong to the parrot "affinity" are supposed to be gifted with the power to sing sweetly. One condition is, however, attached to this gift: they must always hold

up their heads while singing and never lower their eyes to the ground till the end of the song. This prohibition is enforced because parrots are supposed to fly with heads held high, lest, by mischance, their spittle should fall to the ground. Hunters say that, should a parrot let fall even a single drop of spittle while flying, the bird dies at once. "That is why parrots always hold their heads so high when they fly."

Crocodile souls are also credited with the power to sing in a bass voice, like the sound which their familiar is supposed to produce, deep down in his throat.

The Fish Eagle is thought to be the affinity of many chiefs. Ibokk Edem Idiong, for instance, who came to Ndiya from Ikot Imaw, is credited with the power to send forth his soul into this bird; then, soaring above the town, he can look down and see all that is being done there. "This is a favourite affinity, because the Fish Eagle is a very powerful bird. Therefore chiefs try to pass on the secret to their sons. Men of this totem are given very long life. They grow to be old, old, old; yet their strength remains to them, instead of fading away like that of other aged men."

Often people take ripe palm nuts into the bush and strew them upon the ground, calling upon the name of this bird. No matter how far off he may be, he will come at the call, swooping down from out the clear sky to enjoy the offering. Then, stretching strong wings, he sails away once more.

By some it is thought that men partially blind, or with filmy-looking eyes, belong to this totem; but no confirmation of such a statement could be found. According to general belief, those with weak, rheumy eyes are bush-cat souls, because these animals are said not to see well in the daytime, as the sun is too strong for them.

There is hardly a wild creature which is not credited with some human affinity, and usually the latter is marked with a sign which betrays him. Monkey-souls, for instance, have deep-set eyes, and, some say, hands of which the fingers are drawn inwards. Among Chief Henshaw's labourers are two, a mother and son, the first of whom is thought to be a baboon soul, and the second a chimpanzee.

Usually fast runners, and those who move with a peculiar creeping motion, are looked upon as leopard souls, while the smallest creatures—rats, mice, and even insects so minute as hardly to be seen by the naked eye—have their affinities. At one town there were so many rats that the people groaned for deliverance from these pests, as once, according to legend, did the inhabitants of Hamelin Town in Brunswick. Neither by day nor night could these unfortunates find rest. By day, their food and clothes were devoured, and no sooner did they fall asleep than the rats attacked their bare toes.

“Now in this town was a chief who was old and very wise. He called to him several Juju men who could understand animals’ speech, for many of the more powerful priests and witch-doctors can do this. Together they considered what was best to be done, and, after long consultation, went to the Egbo shed, where the chief caused the Great Drum to be beaten, while he himself called out in a loud voice :

“ ‘Listen, rat people ! We know well who you are. If, therefore, you do not stop troubling us, we will catch and kill you in your human forms.’ After this the rat folk were afraid, and so left off annoying their neighbours.”

A similar Juju is said to have been put in force by the Efut people to rid themselves of the swarms of sand-flies and mosquitoes which were troubling them. On this occasion Chief Henshaw was present and witnessed the rites, immediately on the completion of which the plague ceased. The name of the Juju employed for this purpose was Uduan Ekkpe.

At first sight it would seem strange that the souls of human beings should be thought to enter so diminutive a body as those of sand-flies or mosquitoes. Yet it was explained that this were-form is a very useful one, since it permits those who possess it to pass unnoticed anywhere, and thus listen and watch, so that the most jealously guarded secrets come to their knowledge.

A man named Ekuere Eka Obong was accused of belonging to the rat affinity before the Awa Native Court on September 20, 1913. He himself brought a charge for



A FAMOUS WERE-LEOPARD.

defamation of character on account of the accusation. The case is of some interest, since the method of metamorphosis was described in detail.

The prosecutor, Ekuere Eka Obong, stated on oath : " Some time ago I took action against my wife. Her brother told me before court, ' Your case will be dismissed, as my sister will say whatever I like. You are a wizard and have been bewitching my sister and myself.' He said all this in open court, so, after the case was dismissed, I went to the District Commissioner to ask him to revise it."

Udaw Nwa Ekkpe—witness for prosecutor—sworn, stated : " I am a member of court and was present when the case was tried. I heard the accused, Ekkpo Udia, say to prosecutor : ' You used to come through a hole in the roof, during the night time, to my sister as she lay sleeping.'"

James Akpabio—witness for prosecutor—stated on oath : " I am assistant clerk at Awa Court. I heard the first accused charge prosecutor with witchcraft. Accused said : ' I hear that you used to come through a hole in the roof at night to join my sister as she lay sleeping. That is not the way for a man to come into his wife's house ! According to our custom, when a man enters in that way he is called a wizard ! ' "

Ekkpo Udia, defendant, stated : " My sister said in court to her husband : ' When I slept in my house, during the night time, with both doors locked, I used to see you inside the room. How did you manage to get in all those times ? ' I remarked to her : ' According to our native custom, if a man wishes to enter his wife's house, he should knock upon the door and wait until this is opened to him. Should a man be found in the central room, without the opening of any door, he would seem to have acted in the manner of a wizard.' "

The wife, Adiaha Udaw Inyang Ita, also stated : " One evening, soon after I married prosecutor, we were sitting down together. He told me : ' I have bought a witchcraft from some one, but the affair is not yet quite settled. The way of entering this affinity is to catch rats and take these out to the bush. One of them must be ground up and mixed with the medicine that I have bought. When

this has been done, some of the potion is given to the live rats. Then, whenever the owner of the Juju wants to bewitch any one, but cannot go himself in person, he sends a rat instead, or rather he sends his soul in the form of a rat. So sometimes when you hear a rat jumping about on the roof at night time it is either sent by a wizard or is one which contains his soul.' When prosecutor told me this there was no one present. It took place when we were sitting alone together inside my house.

"Next night I was lying asleep. I woke up suddenly and saw prosecutor standing in the middle of the room. I asked: 'Why do you do this? Do you not understand that if a man comes to his wife's house, it is his place to knock on the door or call to her?' He did not answer me and went away. The door had been locked from the inside. Some days afterwards I reported the matter to my brother, the first accused, and asked: 'Is it right for a husband to treat his wife in this manner?' I said in court also to my brother that prosecutor used to come to me in the form of a rat, through a hole in the roof, as I lay sleeping.

"On two occasions he came and lay by me, after entering the room in a manner which I could not understand. The first time that he did this I was frightened, and called out for his mother to come; but, on her arrival, she began to quarrel with me, asking: 'Do you wish to proclaim my son to be a wizard?' At first I did not know what had happened to me until he had gone away, when I found signs of what he had done. . . . When I woke up the first time, half-dazed from sleep, he did not seem to me to be like a man; but the second time I saw him as a man. When he entered my room the first time in this secret manner, I was dreaming that I had gone up to Abassi's (*i.e.* God's) house, where Abassi himself dwelt among his chiefs. When I woke, I found the signs of what had happened, and, on looking up, saw my husband scrambling along the roof like a big rat."

In answer to question by Court: "He certainly had the skin and shape of a rat. I was frightened, and did not take time to look at his face."

Question by prosecutor : " Did you report this to any one during all the two years which have since passed ? "

Answer : " I told Akpan Inaw, who is the head of your house."

Akpan Inaw, witness for second accused, stated on oath : " Adiaha told me : ' Here is the man whom you bade me marry. He has behaved in a bad manner. Whenever I slept in my house he used to come in the middle of the room without any door being opened to him. I believe that he must be a wizard.' "

" I prevented her from making such statements, saying : ' Hush ! Do not say anything of the kind. He might have opened the door without making a noise. If you continue to repeat a thing like this, his family will say that you are proclaiming their son as a wizard before the people. Wait until we hear that the man has behaved in the same way to some other woman. Then we shall all know that your story is true.' "

Another witness, Ekott by name, stated on oath : " Some days ago a man named Okun Akpan Inaw told me that prosecutor had threatened to take the soul of his brother-in-law, the first accused, and put it into the wall, in order to kill its owner."

Incredible as it may seem to twentieth century ideas, such cases not infrequently come before the courts, and are constantly brought before the council of chiefs, or town meeting, which usually comes together to judge such things before they reach the ears of Government.

CHAPTER IX

THE SPIRITS OF BEASTS AND TREES

SOME Ibibio folk-stories vaguely shadow forth the belief that not only men, but also anthropoid apes, are capable of sending out their spirits to animate the forms of other species. It was not possible to obtain satisfactory corroboration on this point ; but both animals and trees are widely credited with the power of employing astral forms should occasion arise.

All over this region men affirm that, at night time, when a goat or other bait has been tied to a post in order to attract a leopard, hunters, lying in wait, notice that the beast usually sends forth a shadow shape—" Like a great black cat, which has hidden up all its bright skin, so that it may pass unseen, and thus make sure that all is safe, before the coming of the beast himself."

Should a hunter be unaware of this ruse on the part of his quarry, and so shoot at the astral body, he loses all hope of a kill for that time, since the leopard, warned by the shot, goes back to the bush, from the shelter of which nothing will induce him again to venture forth that night.

From this belief comes the Ibibio proverb applied to a man who " Looks before he leaps " :

<i>Ekkpe ededip nkem</i>	<i>osio</i>	<i>ndedek-anyan.</i>
Leopard hides spots	puts out	shadow.

Some animals are also thought capable of sending their spirits back to earth in apparently tangible form. This belief is illustrated by many stories, of which the following, told by Udaw Owudumo of Ikot Atako, may be cited as typical :

“ The place where our people are laid to rest in the arms of Mother Isong lies some way from the town. Part of it is burial-ground, and the other part is used for farms. Five days a week the townsfolk work on their land, but on the two days called Big and Little Sunday no work may be done.

“ Once a man named Akpan disobeyed this rule and went to his farm on Big Sunday. About noon, while he was busily hoeing, he heard the sound of tom-toms softly beaten, and of most sweet singing. He thought: ‘ Some one is giving a play,’ so hid himself to watch. Nothing was to be seen, save the yam vines waving in the breeze, yet all about him he heard the voices of dead people whom he had known, and who were buried near by. Then a great fear fell upon him, and he stayed quite still in his hiding-place, waiting to see what would happen.

“ After a while he was aware of flocks of goats moving up and down, and eating the leaves in the farms. Now Akpan well knew that there were neither compounds nor towns in the neighbourhood, so there was nowhere from which so many goats might have strayed. He therefore felt sure that what he saw must be the spirits of victims slain in the funeral rites of those who slept near by.

“ When the herds had passed out of sight, the terrified man crept from his hiding-place, and hastened home to tell what he had seen. The people listened and answered :

“ ‘ You know that it is forbidden to go to farm to-day. Therefore the ghosts come forth and walk abroad untroubled by the presence of earth-folk.’

“ After this Akpan never again went to his farm on the forbidden days.”

Animals set as guardians of sacred places, such as the dwellings of gods and strong Jujus, are also said to have the power of sending forth their astrals, in order to bar the way to those who would trespass within the holy precincts.

Sacred trees, too, are thought to project shadow shapes. Such an one grows near Eket, on the bush-path between Ukwa and Ikot Ibiuk. Low down in the ancient trunk, a great hole is to be seen through which sick folk creep, in the hope that their illness may be cured. Hither, too, come

barren women and impotent men, trusting that their curse may be taken from them by the power of the Tree Spirit.

The name of the indwelling dryad is Ekwekwe, and it is strong to protect all who seek its aid. In olden days, should a neighbouring town come against those who had grown up beneath its shadow, Ekwekwe would block up the road, so that the invaders were unable to pass by. This it did by sending out its astral form to guard the way. No matter from what quarter the enemy approached, they found a tree growing right in their path, where never tree grew before. The great branches groaned and waved, as if stirred by a mighty wind, and so sinister was sight and sound, coming whence no impediment should have been, that terror fell upon the invaders, and they fled to their homes, leaving the "Children of the Tree" unharmed.

In 1902 a punitive expedition was attacked in the neighbouring Sacred Grove of Edogho Ukwá. Many of the Ekets fled to Ekwekwe for protection, and were mown down round its base. As the survivors sadly say: "The spirits of Grove or Tree are mighty for black men, but against white men's guns they are powerless to save."

At Oyubia, just off the main road, two other guardian trees may be seen standing, one on either side of the way, near the head chief's compound. When asked if these were set there for any special reason, Chief Enyinehi answered: "Yes. They were planted by the whole people of the town many, many years ago. Both are named Ukpan, which means trees which can stop folk, and the reason why they are so called is that, in time of war, should an enemy creep up, in the dark, to surprise the town, so soon as they near the place where the trees mount guard, the neighbouring bush begins to sway and moan, with a sound as of the passage of many warriors. Through the branches also shadow forms are seen, like a great army rushing down upon the invaders. A going is heard in the tops of all forest trees, while the branches of Ukpan shake and groan with a terrifying sound." This is said to strike such dread into the hearts of the foe that they flee away, throwing down their arms, so that they may be the less impeded. Enyinehi himself states that he has

known this happen twice, and on each occasion, when dawn rose behind the great trees, the ground was found strewn with weapons flung away by the panic-stricken enemy.

It is only comparatively few trees, such as the silk-cotton, *Bombax gigantea*, the Iroko or African oak, *Chlorofora excelsa*, or the oil bean, *Pentaclethra macrophylla*, which are credited with being inhabited by human spirits or by Juju.

Perhaps nothing shows more clearly how near are these people to the heart of Nature than the close ties between earth's human children and their brothers, the great trees. When an Ibibio has any trouble which seems to him too hard to bear, he chooses out some giant of the forest, and, standing humbly before it, with hands outstretched in supplication, says :

" You, O Tree, are a big man, and heavy things seem but light to you. I am but a small being, poor and weak, and my trouble is too great for me to bear. Will not you therefore, who are so strong, take it from me? Since, to your strength, it would be as nothing."

Then, after making sacrifice, the man goes away in peace, believing that his burden will oppress him no more.

Just outside Idua Oronn, to the left of the main road, stands a giant tree, in which dwells one of the minor guardian spirits of the town. One night, early in May 1913, a great branch fell from this and lay across the road. Soon after daybreak the women began to pass on their way to farm. As each neared the prostrate limb, she gathered a bunch of leaves from the wayside, and, on climbing over the obstacle, dropped them upon it, saying :

Owo osong enyene ndikpa!
(When) person old must die !

Afo omosong do enyene ndikpa!
You old therefore must die !

In the evening, on coming back from farm work, the same thing was done, until the heap of leaves had grown so great that the bough was hidden beneath. This covering of verdure was spread over the fallen branch, as a

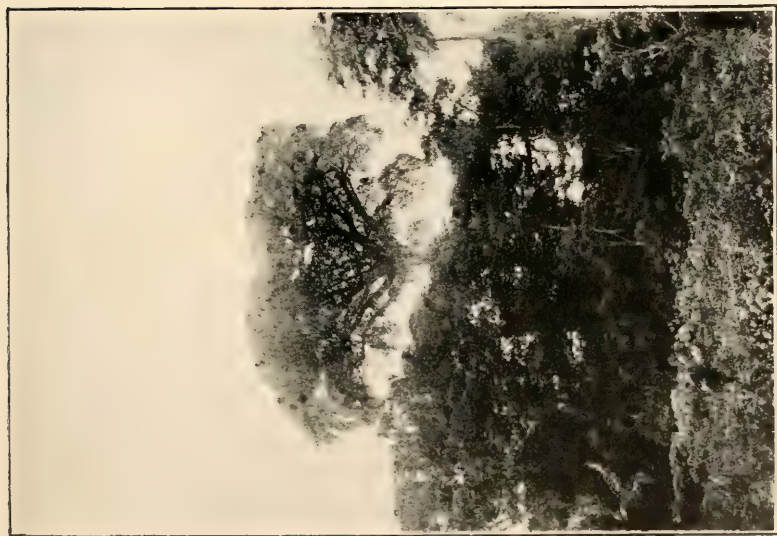
corpse-cloth is laid over the limbs of one new dead, that the indwelling spirit might not feel neglected and untended.

At Ikwita, a village between Oronn and Oyubia, there is another sacred tree, and should a branch from this fall in the direction of any of the inhabitants, it is thought to be a sign of coming misfortune to that family. "Great trees can always give signs to those who believe in them, and many have the power of speaking through the mouths of their priests." Such an one can be seen at the town of Oduko, some few miles to the south of Oyubia, on the Oronn—Eket main road, the like of which, so the people say, is to be found nowhere else on earth. Its name is Eyeyek, and within it dwells a "live power," which can speak to its worshippers through the priest of Idiong, and acts as guardian to those who take refuge in its shadow. The people do not often mention it to strangers. Indeed, I have reason to believe that we are the first "white men" either to have seen the tree or heard the tale, which was related to us by Obuoho, son of the head chief, and runs as follows :

"Once, long ago, a mighty man named Okpaw Ebiribong dwelt upon earth. He had a great compound near where the tree now stands. For many years he ruled over all the country-side, but, in the end, called his people around him and said :

" 'To-morrow I am going to die. Do not bury my body as is done with those of common men, but robe me in my richest garments, carry me forth, and lay me before the chief entrance to the compound.' Then, turning to his best-loved wife, he added : 'As for you, sit upon the verandah facing the place where my body is laid, weeping and watching over it. Behind you set all your fellow-wives, and beyond them again our kinsmen and the slaves of the house. When these are gathered together, wait in silence to see what will happen.'

"All was done as Ebiribong commanded. The funeral guns were fired—boom, boom ; then, for a long time, the people sat watching. After a while they saw flocks of birds, small and great, flying thither from every direction. On the trees near by these perched, and all over the com-



THE GREAT TREE WHICH SPRANG FROM THE SPOT WHERE
THE BODY OF EBIRBONG LAY.



CUT STONE NEAR OFUN ATAM.
(See p. 128.)

pound roofs. Soon there rose a sound of singing, at first very soft and sweet, then louder and clearer, till all the air was full of song. First the little humming-birds separated themselves from the rest and flew down to settle upon the body. Others followed, till nothing was to be seen of the corpse or the mat upon which it lay. After a while there came the sound of a great rushing of wings, and the birds rose, bearing with them the body of Ebiribong. Up and up they soared, till the whole cloud of them was as nothing but a dark speck against the white sky, and at length disappeared altogether. From that day no trace of the chief was ever seen, but from the place where his body had lain a little green shoot pushed forth. In time this grew to be a tree, the like of which is not to be found—no, not if the bush of all the world be searched for it.”¹

Out of this story has grown a proverb which is used as a reproach to a man over-proud or boastful: “Speak not as though you were Ebiribong, who was borne up to the sky,” runs the warning; “when you die you will lie in the arms of Isong, our mother, as is the lot of common men.”

Up till 1895 another sacred tree might have been seen in Oduko market-place. The tragedy of its fall was told us from several sources, and ran in substance as follows:

One day when the first traders arrived with their loads and prepared to spread out the various wares beneath its shadow, they looked up, and behold! down the bark little streams were flowing, red like the blood which pours from fresh-made wounds. All the market-folk gazed at the wonderful sight, then left their goods and ran to spread the news. From far and near people crowded in, and when darkness fell a mysterious rain of blood was still dripping from the tree.

Dawn broke next day on streams of market-folk already

¹ We were naturally anxious to determine the species of this mysterious tree, but so far aloft grew its leaves and flowers that only by shooting could a specimen be obtained. To enrich our collection by this means would have wounded the susceptibilities of the people of the neighbourhood. All that it was possible to do, therefore, was to bring home a young sapling, many of which had sprung up at the foot of the parent tree. The kind authorities of the South Kensington Natural History Museum were, however, unable to hazard even a guess at its species from such inadequate material.

wending their way toward Oduko; but when they came in sight of the tree they found that the red sap had ceased to flow. Only dark spots on the ground and clotted streaks on trunk and branches remained to prove that the strange happenings of the day before had been no dream. Somewhat reassured, buyers and sellers settled down after a while to the ordinary business of the day. It is the greatest mart of the whole District. Eket, Ubium, Oronn, and people from the banks of the Ambo River, several thousand in all, meet there for sale and barter. On this occasion the crowd was even greater than usual, since many had come from curiosity to see the bleeding tree.

Just before noon business was at its height. The people were packed in a dense mass beneath the shadow when, without a moment's warning, the great trunk crashed down, killing over a thousand people and wounding hundreds more.

From Oronn and neighbouring lands a bitter cry went up. Hardly a family of all the country-side but mourned the loss of some member. When the branches had been cut through and dragged away and the huge bole rolled to one side the sight was indescribable. Many bodies were crushed into nothingness, while several new-born babes were found to have met Death on life's very threshold. The greater number of corpses were buried near the place where they fell, but some were carried away to far-off graves.

For a whole month no one went to market, and during all this time, according to the custom of the country, sacrifice after sacrifice was offered, that the cruel spirit which had entered into the tree might be satisfied with his hideous holocaust and leave the rest of the people unharmed.

It is perhaps worth mentioning that, in the course of our wanderings through the bush, we have occasionally come across trees which, when cut, exude a deep blood-red sap. It is possible that this peculiarity was shared by the tree above described, and that one of the sudden, terrible tornadoes which so often break out in this part of the world had, since the last market-day, raged around it with such fury as to cause trunk and branches to crack and split.

This would account for the phenomenon which first roused the fear of the people, while internal injuries, though invisible from below, might easily have brought about its sudden collapse.

Eighteen years later, as we passed through the market-place on our way to visit the tree of Okpaw Ebiribong, the scene was one of typical peace. Gentle-eyed cows, with coats of black and white satin, slept in the shadows or cropped the scanty herbage with which the place is ringed. Only the giant trunk, shattered and riven, now half-buried by bush and creepers, remains—a grim reminder of the tragedy it caused.

In various parts of the country grow “talking palms,” some of the most famous of which are reported to have been found, in olden days, along the shores of the creek which leads to Onossi.

Not far from the banks of the Cross River stands another mysterious palm tree, to which, in times of difficulty or danger, people are still said to go on pilgrimage. Beneath its shade may be seen a little hut, in which dwells its priest, and the method of consulting the oracle is as follows:

When any dispute has arisen as to a dead man’s will—or should it be desirable to discover some secret the knowledge of which was not revealed before death—inquirers take an offering and go to consult the priest of the “Whispering Palm.” Only by him may questions be put, and the moment he has spoken all must preserve dead silence and remain without motion. Suddenly a “going” is heard in the top of the palm trees, after which the branches are said to sway and bend, as if some heavy body had alighted among them.

Then, clear to all ears, comes the answer, and the questioners cowering beneath assert that it is always given in the very voice of the dead man.

At Uya-Oronn, not far from the main road and near the banks of the river of the same name, stood, until the summer of 1913, a giant tree, called Okum Ukponn Owo, *i.e.* the Cotton Tree of the Soul (or shadow) of a man. Not far from its base nestled a few compounds belonging to the family whose totem it was. Upon these, one night,

without a moment's warning, the mighty column fell. Even the farthest of the little dwellings was caught by the branches. Seven people were killed, many injured, and the frail tenements almost wiped out of existence.

Not far off, before the Egbo-shed of the same town, stands another cotton tree, to which we were led by Chief Idiokk One. Far over the tallest palms it towers, and amid its graceful leaves and gorgeous scarlet flowers, high rocked against the blue, dwell the souls of all the chief ancestors of the hamlet which it guards. Around the base, so thickly planted as to cover the little mound from which it springs, masses of broad-leaved coco-yams are set, the tubers of which are never eaten by mortals but laid aside to nourish the ancestral shades.

CHAPTER X

THE SOUL, GHOSTS, DREAMS, ETC.

As described previously,¹ Ibibio believe that each man has a minimum of three souls—the ethereal body, the soul proper, and the spirit. According to the testimony of many informants, it is possible for each of the first two to leave its human habitation during sleep. The shadow is by some supposed to be an emanation of the soul, and the word Ukponn is applied to both.

Here, as in many other parts of the world, it is said to be possible to bring about the destruction of an enemy by approaching him at a time when his shadow is clearly to be seen. Then a poisoned rod, dagger, spear-point, or arrow should be flung into its midst, after which the victim is said to fade away and soon die.

Should a man intentionally tread upon the shadow of another, injury would be caused, and for this reason, as with the Ekoi, during certain dances care is taken to stand far apart, lest the feet of one performer might tread upon the shadow of his neighbour.²

Except in the country round Awa, ghosts are not thought capable of producing a shadow, "since they themselves are but shades." A dead body, on the other hand, is everywhere credited with so doing on being carried forth into the sunlight. All who were questioned were quite clear upon this point, "for," said they, "though life has gone, a part of the soul" (possibly the astral) "is yet thought to linger, until disintegration sets in."

Wounds inflicted during dreams are said to retain their

¹ Page 88.

² *In the Shadow of the Bush*, p. 295.

effect in waking hours.¹ Should one, therefore, dream of a fight, in the course of which injuries are sustained, such, for instance, as a blow on head or arm, after waking pain will be felt in the place struck by the dream enemy.

During sleep one of the souls is thought often to leave the body and wander amid strange lands and far-off worlds. At such times there is danger that it may be trapped by an enemy and kept from returning. For this reason people try to prevent their souls from wandering forth in sleep. For instance, when in a dream a man sees another offering him "fine chop" he should make a great effort to induce his dream-self to refuse it, lest peril lurk therein, saying to himself :

"I have all that I want in my house, loving wives and children in plenty, delicate food and comfortable furnishings. I will not therefore leave these and go forth in a dream to enjoy the goods of another, lest an enemy snare my soul and prevent it from returning to me."

From long questioning of men wise in such things, for instance Nte Nte of Erro Eket, Chief Henshaw learnt the following, which he related to us :

"A favourite method of depriving a man of his soul is to go to a strong Juju priest and get him to put in force the plantain charm. For this purpose a large plantain tree" (the Ibibio Tree of Life) "is chosen, growing in the midst of a farm or at some quiet spot. A gash is made in its stem, and then the ill-wisher and priest stand waiting together, calling at intervals on the name of the man to be injured. Sometimes hours pass by, sometimes even days, but at length, if the proper rites have been performed and the hate of the enemy be but strong enough, they see the shaft of the plantain swell. By that they know that the doomed soul has answered their call and entered within. At once they bind the place round with strong cords, so that there should be no escape. Then they wait till the hour of sunset. No sooner does the red sun sink than the plantain stem is slashed through by the stroke of a sharp machet, and, as the tree crashes down, the man whose soul

¹ Especially those inflicted on a man's were-animal. Cf. the doctrine of repercussion.

is imprisoned within dies in his house, even if this be hundreds of miles away.

“ When a man falls sick because his soul has gone forth and is being detained by an enemy, or when he believes that such an one is trying to entice it from out his body, he, in turn, goes to a Juju man known to have the power of seeing clearly. A bowl of water is got ready and set on one side, while an offering of a duck, a fowl, eggs, rice and much fine chop is spread out beneath a heap of Juju leaves on the other. Between the two stands the magician, holding a bird in his outstretched hand.

“ ‘ If any one is trying to catch the soul of this man,’ he calls, pointing to his client, ‘ let the soul of the ill-wisher enter into this bird that I may kill it, and the man be at peace.’

“ After that he takes a little of the rice and, dropping it into the water, says : ‘ Here is good rice, such as you love ! Will you not come and eat it ? . . . No ? ’

“ Next, dropping in the plantains, he says : ‘ Behold, ripe plantains ! Surely you will take this ? . . . No ? ’

“ Then, if nothing else suffices, he will at length throw in fine chop, sardines, perhaps, or even tinned salmon, such as it is hard to resist (!) At last, in the sight of all, the water begins to move in the bowl. At once a man, stationed there for the purpose, shoots an arrow into the bird, which is held under water till this becomes red as blood. Stout cloths are then tied round the bowl, over and over, and these again bound with strong rope. This is done that the evil spirit may not be able to break forth : for the soul of a man is very strong and could burst all bonds save those of new cord well tied.¹ All Ibibio know charms such as this, but the Anang people are specially famous for their knowledge of these things, and have the reputation for knowing plenty medicine too much.

“ When a young man is so ill that he seems on the point of death, especially if suffering from fever, Juju leaves are brought and laid upon his eyes and round his head. Then the medicine man stands by his bed and asks : ‘ Why are you, a young man, about to die ? Is it because it is God’s

¹ Cf. Judges xvi. 11.

time ? Or does an enemy seek to snare your soul and kill you by witchcraft ? ’

“ In his trance the sick man always answers truly, since, as is well known, one at the point of death can see very clearly. Even the thickest walls grow like glass before him, so that nothing is hid from his eyes. Should the evil be in himself, he is forced to tell the bystanders exactly where in his body the witchcraft lies, so that the doctor can cut it out and thus save him.”

A case in which a man was accused of seeking to bring about the death of his own mother by snaring her “ dream soul ” came before the Idua Native Court. In this the accused, named Tomkpata, stated : “ About six months ago my half-brother, Ofuo Afaha Eke, came to my house and said, ‘ You want to kill my mother.’ That evening he beat a drum round the town, crying that I had taken his mother’s soul and imprisoned it in the Egbo-house. Next morning our mother herself came and said that I must give her back her soul.”

Ekanem, witness for prosecutor, stated on oath : “ I remember Ofuo Afaha Eke telling me that Tomkpata had come to his mother in a dream and cut off some of her hair. So next day she went to him and said that he must restore her soul.”

Ofuo Afaha Eke, sworn, stated : “ Tomkpata is my elder brother. I complained to him that my mother had dreamed a dream in which she saw him cut off her hair with scissors. From this we knew that he was trying to snare her soul.”

Efik and most Ibibio think that the soul passes in and out through the nostrils. When, therefore, a person suspected of witchcraft dies, first the nose and then the other openings are stopped up with native pitch, made from a cactus which witches are supposed to dread, in order to prevent the spirit from coming back to reanimate its forsaken tenement and thus obtain organs with which to work its evil will upon the living. This belief is perhaps a survival of that which caused the ancient Assyrians, and even Jews of the present day, to hang up aloes or cacti from the door-arch as amulets to prevent the entrance of demons or evil ghosts.

Like the primitive Sumerians, Ibibio recognise "three distinct classes of evil spirits," called in their language Ibak Ekkpo, "all ready to torment the hapless wanderer." First, the disembodied human soul, which wanders restlessly up and down amid the scenes of its former earth-life; secondly, "strong" or evil Jujus (Ndemmm);¹ and thirdly, bad "medicines" (Ibokk). "Each of these three kinds are divided up into classes according to the several characteristics of the evil spirits which compose them . . . enumerated," in the Utukki Limnuti, "by the constantly recurring line:

<i>Utukku Limnu</i>	<i>Ekimmu Limnu</i>	<i>Ilu Limnu</i>
Evil spirit	Evil ghost	Evil god
<i>Alu Limnu</i>	<i>Gallu Limnu</i>	<i>Rabisu Limnu</i>
Evil demon	Evil devil	Evil fiend."

The seven principal evil spirits are mentioned in the beautiful lines engraved on Tablet K:

Those seven were born in the Mountain of Sunset
And were reared in the Mountain of Dawn,
They dwell within the caverns of the earth,
And amid the desolate places of the earth they live.

Among the wise gods there is no knowledge of them,
They have no name in heaven or earth;
Those seven gallop over the Mountain of Sunset,
And on the Mountain of Dawn they cry;
Through the caverns of the earth they creep,
(And) amid the desolate places of the earth they lie.

Just before a child is expected to be born into any Ibibio family, custom ordains that the husband should offer a sacrifice to ancestors and devils. Should he refuse or neglect this rite the offended ghosts are thought to avenge themselves by stealing away the dream-shape of the unborn. A case illustrating this belief came before the Native Court at Idua, in which Obak Etifit, the plaintiff, stated on oath: "About two years ago I refused to marry defendant, so he kept me imprisoned for two days. Some time after I found that a babe was about to be sent me. The man gave me some medicine to drink, and later, when I went back to visit my mother, I miscarried. Akanyak said that

¹ See p. 22.

it was my mother who had destroyed the babe in my womb, and that she must therefore pay him seven articles, according to our custom. Also he charged me with trying to poison him with Juju."

The defendant stated: "I remember that, two years ago, when Obok left the Fattening-room she came to my house, but soon ran away, so I sent Ata Nkono to bring her back. He caught the girl and put chains upon her, then led her home to me.

"As soon as I saw what had been done to her I set her free, and said to the man: 'Do you not know that no one is allowed to chain up another in these days?' After that we lived together as man and wife till she conceived. I bought some medicine for her, and six days after taking it she went to her mother's house. Before she left me I wished to give her another medicine, but she refused it. She stayed away for a long time. One day her mother sent to tell me that the devils had made her daughter miscarry, because I had not sacrificed to them."

In another case, heard before the same Court, Antikka Antikka prosecuted his wife, Owo Ama Esie, on the charge that she had accused him of witchcraft. During the course of the trial the plaintiff stated on oath: "Accused told me that it was I who killed her unborn children. She said that I took them from her by witchcraft to devour with my 'witch-company,' which, she stated, was composed of Oronn and Calabar people."

In support of this testimony a fellow-wife named Edua Aban, sworn, stated: "I remember that accused said to her husband: 'If I am about to have another child I will go, before its birth, to Afaha-'Nduk, where my people dwell. You wish to devour our children in witchcraft with Oronn and Calabar people.' She said this because of all the children which she had conceived not one remained to her, and she believed that her husband had killed them by drawing out their shadow souls while yet in the womb."

Antikka Antikka further stated: "Owo Ama Esie also said: 'Five times I have conceived by you but have never born a child, because you are a wizard and you and your witch-company prevent me from bearing my babes. Had I

known earlier of your witchcraft I would not have stayed with you, but have gone back to Afaha-'Nduk, where I have power. If I had done this my children would have been alive to-day.' "

Many sick people are thought to see and converse with the ghosts of those whom they have known in life. Often long-dead friends come at such times, a father, mother, grandmother, or a wife much loved. Sometimes these gentle spirits bear with them branches of medicinal leaves, or, taking the sick man's hand, lead him forth in a dream to bush or farm, there to point out the herbs or roots which will cure his illness. It has been noticed that remedies so indicated never fail.

Not in sickness only but all through life such kindly guardians are thought to be near by. As Mary Kingsley says: "I have often seen a man sitting at a bush fire or in a village palaver-house turn round and say, 'You remember that, mother?' to the ghost that to him was there!"¹

"Eti Ekkpo," or gentle ghosts such as these, are often instrumental in warding off threatened danger and protecting from the attacks of evil spirits. They are thought to be drawn back to earth by ties of love to wife or kin, or when called upon for aid in time of peril. To them prayers are addressed, almost in the words of the ancient Babylonian petition offered over a sick man:

May the evil Spirit that hath seized him stand aside!
May a kindly guardian stand at his head,
May a kindly Spirit stand continually at his side.²

Such protectors are often invoked to repel the attacks of men learned in black magic who wish to ensnare the soul of a sleeper. "For this purpose the wizards send out their dream-shapes in the night-time, robed in long garments and with faces covered like the masked Egbo. Through window or door they glide, though locked and bolted never so surely, till at length they reach the room where the man whom they wish to injure lies sleeping. Here they

¹ *West African Studies*, p. 63.

² R. C. Thompson, *op. cit.* p. 205, line 220 *et seq.*

wind their long garments about him, covering his eyes that he may be unable to recognise them, striving all the while to draw forth his soul and snare it by evil charms, so that it can never return again to its place."

Just such malignant powers were supposed to invade the houses of the Babylonians, and indeed the description given us by an old Ibibio chief was almost in the words of the ancient poem :

The highest walls, the thickest walls,
Like a flood they pass.
From house to house they break through,
No door can shut them out,
No bolt can turn them back.
Through the door like a snake they glide,
Through the hinge like the wind they blow ;
Estranging the wife from the embrace of a husband,
Snatching a child from the loins of a man,
Sending the man forth from his home

Through the gloomy streets by night they roam.¹

When a dreamer finds himself assailed by such visitants he calls upon the names of his ancestors, upon all good Jujus, and on the spirits of those who love him, whether living or dead. If his prayer is answered the assailants, seeing the good wraiths hurrying to the rescue, "fear too much" and fade away, leaving him unharmed.

Dreams are very real to people such as these. As a chief of high standing once said to us while talking over the snares of the witch-folk : "I myself have often wakened suddenly in the night and seen them, shadowy, in my room."

When a man first falls sick it is the usual practice to make a sacrifice to the "manes" of his dead father and mother, lest the illness should have been sent in punishment for having offended them. Such offerings are set out on the right hand, while wife, children, or friends stand pointing to a second set on the left, and crying : "Evil ghosts ! Hide yourselves on this side. Do not come near to this man who is sick." If a woman is sick, or cursed with barrenness, she pounds camwood to a fine powder and lays

¹ R. C. Thompson, *Idem*, Tablet 5, line 25, and Tablet 4, line 14.

some of this before the image of her father, praying that he will drive off malignant powers, so that, once more, all may be well with her.

When a slave died his body was not buried but thrown into the bush. Then, after sufficient time was thought to have elapsed for it to be cleansed through decay, some of the members of the owner's family used to go and fetch home the skull. This was then placed in a shrine and sacrifices offered to it. The cult of such skulls was called Okova.

With every Ibibio the worship of his ancestors is one of the most important factors in his life. The dead (Ekkpo) and the Jujus are almost equally revered : in fact, they are deemed to work together in helping mankind, and the two cults therefore partly coincide. The former are perhaps looked upon as nearer and more friendly, and especially helpful as regards fertility of crops and children. They are consulted on all matters of importance either through a diviner or the Idiong priest, or by a personal interview with the Shade. It is not at all unusual, it is said, for a man to see and converse with the materialised spirit of his ancestor, and if the presence of blood, as is claimed,¹ makes materialisation more feasible, this may be one of the reasons for the blood sacrifice on such occasions. Offerings are always made at the time of the planting of farms and at the new yam festival.

The ancestors are usually represented by plain or carved posts, about one foot high, which may only be made from the Akwa or Ekkomm trees, tied round with piassava and surmounted, in the case of a chief, by a skull. The posts are placed either on the verandah, generally on a small clay mound, or in a little shrine, which may be either within or without the house. A frequent form is that of figures used as the hafts of short ceremonial spears, the metal points of which are fixed into the earthen floor of the shrine dedicated to ancestor worship.

Among the Oronn and Okkobbor the figures are of a very elaborate type, and may be found in ghost huts, at the back of "palaver" sheds, before the houses of descendants, and

¹ See p. 242.

over graves. The head is supported by a neck, often as long as head and head-dress combined. At the base, instead of the collar-bone, two wooden bosses are to be found resting on two slender pillars a foot or more in height, while a third continues the spinal column from beneath the neck. All three spring from a solid ring supported by the upward bent arms. The elongation of the upper part of the body serves two purposes: first it gives room for the representation of a long beard, plaited into a sharp point, and secondly for two small effigies said to be those of the deceased's favourite wives, which are often found seated on the ring.

At the present day the people are nearly all clean shaven, but formerly they used to wear a plaited beard elongated by artificial means. The only surviving example of a similar fashion which came to our notice was an old Okkobbor chief, who wore his beard in three plaits.

Among Efik the Ekkpo are usually represented by a small open native pot, filled with water and placed on a clay mound on the verandah, along with some Afia-Okuk wires, white baft, palm-leaves, and, in the case of a chief, a skull. No instance is known to me of any Ibibio ancestors being symbolised by stones, as among many other Semi-Bantu and some Ibo tribes. As a rule, representations are only made for those who have brought children into being.

Sacrifices are always offered to the deceased members of a club or secret society at one and the same time. The word for the collective body of dead members is Idemm;¹ for instance, the Idemm Ekkpe connotes all the past members of the Ekkpe Society, and is generally represented among Eastern Ibibio by the tall, cut phallic stone, Itiatt Ekkpe, embedded in a small clay mound and often surmounted by a cap.² All the sacrifices, including on occasion human ones, are made before these stones, which are found at certain places in the bush, remains of ancient circles, or temples which existed among most of the old Semi-Bantu tribes.

The dead are thought to live in the ghost country, which may be either under the earth or on the earth, but in a

¹ The word includes also, on occasions, the living members.

² Cf. the Ekoi Etai Ngbe in *In the Shadow of the Bush*.

different plane, for a period of one or two years, after which they reincarnate—generally in the same family, unless they consider themselves to have been ill-treated in their former life. Since one of the chief ambitions of all natives is to have, or be a member of, a large family, this idea has a considerable influence in bringing about the kind treatment of relatives. The belief in the short period between incarnations is not inconsistent with the great respect paid to ancestors, since the real Ego is always with God, and his representatives on earth and in the ghost town are only emanations.

Certain places in this District are said to be specially haunted by ghosts, which wait invisible by the wayside, ready to fall upon any person not protected by strong "Juju medicine." As such an one draws level with his unseen foe, the latter extends a long hand and strikes him across the face. The unfortunate man falls under the blow and lies with his head turned to one side. "When people are found in this position, every one knows that the ghosts have felled them. Sometimes such sufferers can be nursed back to life, but more often they die."

When several people have suffered in this way at a given spot, a noted witch-doctor is fetched, who, by means of rites similar to those already described on p. 121, entices the ghost to enter into a pot, which is then tightly bound round and buried in a deep hole.

At times, when a man is sick, the native doctor says that the illness has come because the patient crossed the path of wicked ghosts or devils. The physician must therefore go out and collect magic bark and leaves, which he pounds into a paste and mixes with the ashes of victims sacrificed before some strong Juju. With this medicine he marks the forehead and back of the sick man, so that the devils should be unable to touch him, although they are all standing round waiting for his soul.

Magic leaves are often laid beneath a sick man's pillow in order to keep his spirit from leaving the body until absent friends can be brought from a distance to take their last farewell of him.

People fear the ghosts of young men far more than

those of old ones, because the former are left away, unwillingly, from all that earth holds dear. These restless spirits are therefore always striving to come back in order to enjoy lost pleasures, or, failing that, to draw their loved ones after them. Old men, on the contrary, are usually willing to rest. There was a strange echo of R. L. Stevenson in the words of an Ibibio chief who, one evening, sat gazing across the waters of the Kwa Ibo River while speaking of the peaceful end of the aged. "When an old man comes to die," he said, "he lays him down with a will. Weary the fisher comes back from the sea and the hunter home from the kill."

The rhyme, however rude, gives somewhat the effect of the singing cadence in the dreamy voice of the narrator. The root thought, at least, is the same, and it is but one more example of how near are "East and West," the most primitive minds and those which are the highest product of our own times and country, when standing face to face with the great facts of Nature—Birth, Death, and that vast "Beyond."

Lest I should, however, be thought to plagiarise without sufficient warrant, I give the exact words :

Kini ebiowo akpade enye akpa ima ima.

When old man dies he dies willingly.

Kini moko iyak ekode ebihi mo ekpa mba.

When fishers fish long they grow tired.

Kini ata utop soanade ebihi mo ekpa mba.

When hunters hunt long they grow tired.

When a spirit loved above the ordinary has departed this life to go to the land of shadows the family set food for him in three places : first, the corner of the verandah ; secondly, at a spot where water falls from the roof when it rains ; and thirdly, at the nearest cross-road.

The chief reason why ghosts are thought to linger upon earth and bring misfortune upon the living is because no offerings have been made or the proper burial rites have not been carried out. Those still believed to haunt the West Coast to-day are the very same which troubled the ancient Babylonians :

A ghost unburied,
Or a ghost that none careth for,

Or a ghost with none to make offerings,
Or a ghost with none to make libations;
Or a ghost that hath no posterity.

When such unhappy wanderers come back to trouble a house, the inmates usually send for an Idiong man, or for any one who can see clearly in such matters. The man thus called in sets light to a dry palm-spadix, from which the nuts have been picked, for this burns slowly and steadily and never flares up. With this in his left hand and a broom formed of fine, hard, flexible twigs, fastened on a long bamboo or palm stem, held in his right, he enters the compound, and goes into every corner of each room, crying out, "Go forth!" at the same time beating the air with broom and burning brand.

"So soon as the ghost's place of refuge is reached, all men hear it crying, just like a little chicken, 'fi! fi! fi!' as the lashes fall upon it and it feels the scorch of the flame." The priest follows the sound, chasing the unhappy wraith hither and thither, till it is driven forth from the compound and the cries are heard to fade away in the distance. "They can smell the odour, too, for the odour of ghosts is very strong and terrible." This belief was also held among Babylonians, as recorded on one of the engraved tablets: "They make the chamber to stink like mice."

At certain times of the year the spirits of the dead are said to be very restless. When, too, they hear that some one has just died in any place, they hasten thither that they may join in eating the sacrifices. This they do by sucking out the essence of the food while leaving it apparently unchanged.

That is the reason why people always strive to prepare two sets of offerings, one for their own ancestors, which they lay to the right of the place of sacrifice, and one for strange ghosts on the left. The offerings most acceptable to ancestral spirits are made as follows:

"Take goats' hearts and chickens' hearts, mix with sliced yams and oil. Then throw the mess before the

carved sticks, saying : ' Here is chop for my father. Here chop for my mother. Next for my grandfather and grandmother and all other ghosts which belong to my family.' "

At times the ancestral spirits demand libations, and are never at a loss for means of making their wants known. An instance of this was given some time ago when a well-known chief was passing along the Akwa Yafe River. " Suddenly," he said, " the canoe grew heavy, as though water-logged, and the utmost efforts of the paddlers failed to move her. After they had tried in vain for some time, an old man who was with us cried : ' It must be that the ghosts are holding us ! Let us pour a libation of rum into the river ! ' This was done according to his word. In a few moments the impediment ceased, and the canoe shot through the water as if propelled by invisible hands of grateful ancestors."

A case in which a boy was stated to have been carried off and hidden beneath the river by the ghost of his dead father, presumably as a means of extracting offerings from the relatives, came before the Native Court of Oyubia on the 6th of August 1913. In this the plaintiff, Owo Ekere Aduoho, stated on oath :

" About ten months ago Oyon 'Nkap took my half-brother with him to trade up the Cross River. On his return he reported to me that the boy had died. He took copper wires and manillas and went to the Idiong diviner at Ubodo, asking him to practise the charm and see where my brother was. On his return he told me that the priest had said it was the boy's father in the ghost town who had taken his son to himself. The diviner held out a large fish and said : ' If you are able to buy this fish, take it out of my hand and at once run from me and make sacrifice therewith at the entrance to the town, calling upon the name of the ghost, after which the boy will return. All this time he has been hidden beneath the river by his father's spirit. Should you make fitting sacrifice, the ghost will relent and let his son come back to life again.' "

From sunset to dawn a ghost can walk abroad and is given special power.

(It hath its exit) at the street of Dawn
(And) its entrance at the street of Sunset.¹

Noon also is a dangerous time, for then the spirits often enter the market-place and walk up and down among the stalls. Buyers or sellers sometimes look up and see a wraith approaching; then possibly something else attracts their attention, they turn their eyes away for a moment, and lo! when they look again the apparition has vanished. At times it will disappear in the blinking of an eyelid.

Abassi of Ndiya saw one such ghost as he stood, at high noon, on the edge of the market-place. It came from behind him, out of the bush, and was robed from head to foot in a long white cloth, while over one shoulder a bag was hanging. As it passed it shot out a hand and struck him so that he fell senseless to the ground. Some of the market-folk noticed his fall and ran up to help. When they had brought him to again, still feeling weak and dizzy, a wise man who chanced to be present said to him: "So soon as your glance fell upon the ghost you should have bent forward and stood waiting with closed eyes and folded hands. Then, if the wraith had struck you, you would have been left unharmed."

Although in most ways resembling the living, there is, as only to be expected, something about ghosts which distinguishes them, in an indefinable way, from beings still on this side of the great barrier. This is illustrated by the following story told by Udaw Owudumo of Ikot Atako:

"There is a town called Edem Inyang, which lies not far from Eket, and thither, one day, a man was walking. On the road he met a girl who was very beautiful, but with something strange about her; for, look as he would, he could not make out from what country she came. As she drew level with him the man stepped before her and asked: 'Where are you going?' But she answered vaguely: 'I do not know. I only walk along.'

"Now the maiden was very beautiful, young, and round limbed, so the man said: 'If you have nowhere else to go, come to my house.' To this the girl answered: 'Very well.'

¹ R. C. Thompson, *op. cit.* p. 177, Tablet G.

"When home was reached, the man called to his wife and said: 'Here is a stranger come to visit us.' The woman looked at the guest and asked: 'Whence does she come? I do not know the fashion of her country.' The man answered: 'Of this I know nothing myself. I only met her walking along the road and brought her home. Please cook chop for her.'

"The wife did as she was bidden, and when all was ready, put pounded yam into a calabash and poured the soup into an earthen bowl, after which she set both before the stranger.

"No sooner had the woman turned her back than the girl took up both vessels, one after the other, and placed them upside down upon the ground. The hostess chanced to glance round and saw what had been done, so asked: 'Why do you do this?' To which the girl replied: 'It is the custom of my country.' The woman said: 'Lift up the calabash and the bowl that I may see them.' The stranger did as she was bidden, and lo! of all the chop which had been within nothing remained. Both were clean and dry as if they had been washed and then baked by fire.

"On this the wife began to tremble. She ran and called her husband, saying to him: 'It seems you have brought a guest with strange manners! See what she has done!'

"The man came and, looking steadfastly at the girl, said: 'I begin to suspect the name of your country.' To which she replied: 'You have guessed rightly. I come from the ghost town.'

"The man asked: 'Can you go back?' She answered: 'Yes.' But he said: 'I will not let you go so soon!'

"On that he ran outside, and returned bearing a log cut from the trunk of a coco-palm, in the midst of which a round hole had been pierced, right through from side to side. Through this he thrust the girl's foot, and bound it round with cross-pieces of wood and stout cords, never before used and woven of tie-tie, such as that which is looped round some Juju shrines, so that she could not pull back her foot again.

"When he had thus secured her, the man said: 'Now

tell me the secrets of the land whence you come.' But she answered : ' Nothing shall you learn from me. I have the power to go back when I choose. If you try to keep me, you will see that something will happen.'

" Now the man was very proud of the capture he had made, and went out and called in the townsfolk to look upon his prisoner.

" All came in answer to his summons ; but when the old men beheld her, they said : ' Let her go. She is no proper girl.' Her captor, however, answered : ' She shall stay until I have learned the secrets of her country ; for I think that this may prove very useful to me.'

" Not long afterwards rain began to fall. Gently at first, then faster and faster. It fell for a week without stopping and so heavily that none ventured outside the houses.

" The people wondered why such torrents came at a time when rain used not to fall. So at length they collected offerings and went before the Idiong man to ask the cause of the downpour. The diviner consulted the oracle and said : ' It is because of the ghost-girl who was caught a week ago and is prevented from going back. So her father and mother sent this great rain.'

" On hearing this the townsfolk went in a body to the man and said : ' If you will not free the ghost-girl, we will kill you.' So he loosened her foot from the log and said ' Go.'

" She answered : ' Before I leave, you must pay me a fine of one goat, one dog and one fowl for seizing me and wasting my time.'

" He brought what she asked and said : ' Take them and go.' But she answered : ' Not yet. You must kill them and throw the blood upon the ground.'

" This too he did, and she went forth from the house, walking slowly, while all the people watched her. Quite clearly they saw her, moving forward as any other girl might do, though with something strange about her, as of one who came from a far country. Suddenly, when she had gone only a little way, she vanished from sight and was never seen any more in that town."

There is a ghost, with specially ghastly attributes, which haunts lonely creeks and is never seen save after nightfall, paddling along in a canoe so old as to be a mere shell, which, like those of the poorer fisher-folk, seems only kept afloat by means of the most careful balancing.

Occasionally some belated paddler, delayed by rough water unexpectedly encountered, meets this grim wraith gliding toward him in his phantom craft, lighted by a bowl of glowing embers set within, as if in preparation for the evening meal.

Such are supposed to be the ghosts of men foully slain upon the waters in the pride of youth and strength, who haunt dark creeks, lowering for victims on whom to wreak their vengeance, for they hate all living men for the sake of those who drove them, untimely, forth from the light of the sun.

Only in broken sentences has a victim, here and there, told something of the horror of such a meeting. Usually, should one of these unfortunates succeed in reaching home, he only arrives, crazed by the terror of the experience, to die soon after, babbling unintelligible words of dread.

From the few indications obtainable, there seems to be a strong resemblance between these ghosts of the mangrove creeks and those described to me years ago by Mom Chow Tanaya, a son of the head priest of Siam and cousin of the present king, which, at certain times of the year, are thought to haunt the flooded rice fields of his country. Possibly, for the sake of comparison, his account may be not without interest here :

“Many years ago there lived a Siamese noble whose name was Sanya. He was but newly wedded to a young wife, Savad by name ; yet so devoted a fisherman was he that, one day when the rice fields were in flood, he left his bride and set forth alone to follow his favourite pursuit.

“All day long he fished over the flooded fields and twilight fell to find him far from home. Then he remembered that he had been long absent, and began to paddle back with all his might. Somehow the waters seemed endless ; he lost his bearings and steered hither and thither in the darkness, trying to find out in what direction to go.

“Time passed and still he seemed no nearer. It grew terrible, alone in the dark, and at last he stood up and called aloud in the hope that some of his servants might have come out to search for him. At first he could hear nothing but an echo of his own voice. Then an answer came from far away, and, not long afterwards, he heard the steady beat of a paddle on the water.

“Sanya turned his canoe in the direction from which the sound came, and soon saw a man like himself alone in a boat, from the end of which a dim light was shining. He hailed the new-comer, saying: ‘My way is lost. Canst thou guide me?’ To which the stranger answered: ‘Surely. Follow me.’

“For a long time the two boats kept together, till at last Sanya could paddle no more for weariness, and called to his guide: ‘We seem no nearer and I can do no more.’ To which the man answered: ‘Endure yet a little. We are even there.’

“Next moment, of a truth, the first boat struck against the bank, and the guide sprang ashore and held the canoe for his companion. The latter landed also, but could see no sign of home, only a faint light, some few yards off, like a dying fire. A chill fear struck at his heart as the guide stirred this and showed him that he had come to one of those places provided for the burning of the dead. As the fire flared, his terrible companion cried: ‘Here is thy home.’

“Sanya replied: ‘Jest not!’ But the evil being stirred the fire yet more till the bright flames played about him, and answered: ‘Knowest thou not who I am? The spirit of one who haunts waste places and desolate waters to wreak vengeance upon thee and all mankind who fall into his hands!’

“At this Sanya laughed and said: ‘Think not to frighten me, for I have no fear of ghosts, neither do I believe in them, but count them only as an idle tale.’

“Upon this the fearful being, standing full in the light of the fire, placed one hand upon each side of his chest, the fingers meeting in the centre between the ribs; then, seeming to pull with all his might, wrenched his body in two,

so that the fire flickered through a great rent in the midst of it.

“ At this fearful sight Sanya, sick with terror, stumbled into his canoe and pushed off, paddling with the energy of despair. After a while his servants found him, and he told them what had befallen, then fell at the bottom of the boat and died.”

With change of name and with mangrove swamp as scene instead of flooded rice fields, the story might have been related, almost word for word, of the ghoul-like inhabitants of Southern Nigerian creeks. Only in one particular does it differ from the African tale in that no Ibibio would dare, thus boldly, to deny the existence of ghosts.

CHAPTER XI

DEATH AND FUNERAL CEREMONIES

WHEN an Ibibio chief grows old and feels that his powers are failing, he goes to the Abia Idiong, or magician priest, and states his trouble. The latter consults the oracle and then gives some such answer as the following :

“ Abassi is calling. He wants you to become his priest.”

On hearing this the old chief goes home full of joy and sends out invitations to his friends.

When these arrive, they find a feast set ready. A cow has usually been killed, and its flesh roasted, together with many fowls. Great bowls of fu-fu, *i.e.* mashed yam, are prepared, while jars of palm wine are continually handed round. The house, too, has been swept and garnished, and one of the largest rooms set apart for the enthronement ceremony. At one end of this apartment a raised platform is to be seen, upon which a throne-like chair is placed. After the feast is over, the chief solemnly seats himself thereon, and is crowned by the Idiong priest with a ring of plaited tie-tie. From this ornament fish-eagle's feathers radiate in every direction, so that it produces somewhat the effect of a nimbus, and is not unpicturesque. Over the chief's body his attendants had previously rubbed a red paint made of camwood, ground fine and mixed to a paste. Upon this background lines of a yellow dye, prepared much in the same way from the wood of the “Etu Uto” tree, are drawn.

After the enthronement the guests take leave, and the chief is left with his best-loved wife and her children, or sometimes with all his wives and children, in a seclusion which may only be broken by those who have gone through

the same rites. Such visitors are allowed, now and again, to enter the room and express the usual complimentary greeting, "Wobotio," *i.e.* sit softly, after which they respectfully withdraw.

An object necessary for the due observance of "Inam," *i.e.* seclusion, as the ceremony is called, is a giant manilla formed of iron or bronze. These can no longer be bought in open market, and have become so valuable that nothing less than a cow would tempt the fortunate possessor to part with one. This object is laid in a conspicuous position in the chamber of seclusion, usually upon a little altar-like erection, and to it prayers and sacrifices are offered daily.

A sad adjunct considered necessary for the due observance of the rite in former days, but now, fortunately, rendered impossible save perhaps in some few villages and compounds hidden from the eyes of Government, was the sacrifice of a slave, who was tied to a tree by throat, waist, arms and ankles, and there left to starve.

The spirits of those offered in this way were thought to serve as forerunners to the realm of the dead, and inform Abassi that the old chief was preparing himself for the call when it should come. Such an one would be found waiting close to the door of the "ghost town" to welcome his master on arrival in the spirit world, so that the chief might not enter servantless in case his shade had out-distanced those of the victims slain for his burial rites.

When a celebrant comes forth from "Inam" he is regarded with great respect, and it is thought that his position in the spirit world has thereby been assured. Should his life be prolonged for several years, during which enough wealth can be gathered together, further invitations are issued and the ceremony once more carried out. After this second seclusion he is looked upon as a very great man indeed, and it is thought that he will sit with Abassi as a head chief in the ghost realm.

Sad, indeed, from a poor man's point of view is the state of affairs in the spirit world. "This is situated neither in the sky nor beneath the earth; but side by side with the abodes of living men, from whom, however, the

dead are separated by a fence, impassable to ordinary mortals.¹ After journeying a while the spirit which has just left its mortal body is thought to reach the door of the ghost town. On this each new-comer must knock and await permission to enter.

"After a time the voice of Abassi is heard asking: 'Who knocks?'

"When an answer has been given the door is opened and the suppliant bidden to enter. He finds himself in a great hall where God sits enthroned with all his big men seated around him.

"Abassi asks: 'What gifts have you brought?' and the rich ghost answers: 'I bring cows, sheep, goats and fowls. Cloths also and manillas in plenty have I, together with many pots great and small; all of which have been spent on my funeral rites.'

"To this Abassi replies: 'Welcome to my kingdom. A good earth-child indeed art thou, and shalt reign with me as one of my chiefs.'

"The poor man, on the contrary, can only answer: 'O Abassi! I am but a poor man and could bring you nothing but myself.' Whereupon the deity announces in a terrible voice (according to one account):

"'Earth worm! Since thou hast come with empty hands, thou shalt be thrown down into the world beneath the earth where all is dark for evermore.'"

This last paragraph with much of the foregoing information was kindly given me by Mr. W. W. Eakin. It bears some appearance of having been arranged, by his informant, with a view to conformity with missionary ideas. So far as I could learn from sources as yet untouched by Christian influence, Abassi only answers: 'Go forth from my presence to the place of the poor and those of no account.'

In any case, whether in this world or the next, the lot of humble members of the community would seem to be gloomy enough. Many a family will impoverish itself for years in order to give to its dead a sufficiently sumptuous funeral to ensure a good reception in the ghost realm.

¹ By some, especially Northern Ibibio, the ghost towns are thought to be under the ground. See p. 128.

Except in the case of persons of distinction, or when delay is necessary to allow of the return of an absent eldest son, interment usually takes place within twenty-four hours of death, and the corpse is not dried or embalmed. In some parts all save slaves are buried in the house or verandah, while in others this honour is confined to adults of importance. The corpse is washed with either cold or warm water, according to the local custom, and rubbed over with camwood, black vegetable dye, and, sometimes in the case of men, with chalk. It is then clad in its finest robes and all friends come and take leave of it.

Among many Ibibio, by old custom, the "best-loved" wife and many of her fellows were killed and buried with their dead lord, but at the obsequies of a "big" man male slaves, sometimes bought for the purpose—their number depending upon the wealth of the family—were placed at the bottom of the grave, either alive with their arms and legs broken or after having been more mercifully clubbed to death. On their bodies was laid the corpse of the chief, tied up in mats, and set round him were from £1 to £10 worth of rods, with yams, pots of water, and his own spoon, matchet, etc. Guns and cannon were fired off, many cows and goats killed, much palm wine supplied, and a feast began which lasted up to a month, during which the members of his various clubs or secret societies came out and gave "plays." On the day after the burial a deep hole was usually dug at the feet of the corpse and in this another slave was buried alive, standing upright.

This first burial, generally called Mkpa Owo, is followed, from six months to two years later, by the Ewonga or Usiak Ekkpo, the second burial, with which the obsequies are completed and without which the deceased is thought to be unable to take his proper position in the realm of the dead. The ceremonies and feasts last from one to four weeks; during this time the various clubs to which the dead man belonged come out, but in some parts do not again give the full "plays" as at first. Every one, rich or poor, male or female, has a second burial, save children or those who have no relative or friend to carry it out for them.



CHIEF'S MEMORIAL.

Among most of the central Ibibio tribes elaborate arbour-like erections, called Ngwumaw or Ngwumu Ufak, are raised as memorials to chiefs—and in some cases to “big” women—in a prominent spot near the town, and are “furnished” with the deceased’s gun, matchet, cup and those articles most used by him in everyday life. At the back or side of these is placed what we always called a little “Ka house,” with window or door into the central chamber, provided, as in ancient Egypt, for the abode of the dead man’s Ka or double. Figures of the chief, favourite wives, children, retainers, and slaves may also be seen—counterparts of the Ushabtiu. Lesser men are merely provided with little huts containing native pots, some of beautiful shape and elaborate decoration.¹

When a man of high rank in the Ekong Society dies, the body is robed in its best garments and set on a chair in a room prepared for the purpose, that friends and kinsfolk may come and do honour to the dead. Round the right wrist a long strip of white cloth is tied. This is fixed to the roof-beam; and close to the place where it is knotted a bell and a live cock are hung, while a goat is sacrificed and laid as a footstool under the feet of the corpse.

An almost identical custom is described from Bigongji in the South Cameroons, where, as sketched by one of the members of the Duke of Mecklenburg’s Expedition, the dead chief Djaolo was found sitting in a chair with his right hand tied by a cord to the roof-beam.²

At burial the body is placed in the grave upon its back; but the right arm is stretched up at right angles, as if pointing the road back to life. It is held in this position by means of the strip of cloth tied round it while the soil is carefully filled in. It seems that the end of the strip was formerly left above ground, pegged into the earth. This is often omitted in the present day, and the reason for the custom seems to have been forgotten. It is, however, explained by a similar rite recorded by Sir E. Wallis Budge:

“Among the Moro a ligament of bark was tied to the little finger of the left hand, and the other extremity was

¹ For phallic offerings in the Ngwumu see p. 275.

² *From the Congo to the Niger and the Nile*, vol. ii. p. 134.

drawn to the surface and there attached to a peg driven into the ground. This was to enable the dead man to communicate with his children.”¹

At the present day, when all is ended and the grave smoothed over, a strip of white cloth is laid across, the two ends firmly pegged into the ground.

Such are the funeral rites for men belonging to the War Society who yet die quietly of old age or are cut off by disease. Others are ordained for those slain in actual warfare. When a man in the prime of life is killed in battle, the body is carried home to his town by the wedded women who are his next-of-kin. No man may touch the corpse. Weeping and singing sad songs it is borne by their gentle hands to a place of thick bush called Owok Afai, *i.e.* the forest of those slain by sudden death. The ceremonies proper to such occasions are unknown to men; but an ancient woman was induced to confide a part, at least, to my wife.² No maiden is permitted to be present. Only to matrons may the sad mysteries be revealed.

To suicides no burial rites are accorded, though, should one have left a son, the latter might take the body and bury it secretly in an unmarked grave, far away from those of men who died in honourable ways. When there was no son to perform this last service, native law decreed that the corpse should be left in the place where death occurred. Such a case happened, a short time ago, at the village of Ntit Oton. A man named 'Nwan hanged himself from the roof-beam of his house. When the neighbours heard of this, a law was proclaimed that none should go near the desecrated dwelling. The compound was deserted and the corpse of its former owner hung from the roof-tree until decay set in. Then fire was laid to the building, which was burnt down, burying the body beneath its ruins.

The young are usually laid to rest lying on the side, in an attitude of sleep, save only those undesirables whose return is not wished, the bodies of whom are placed in the grave face downward. Grown men, on the other hand, are buried lying flat upon their backs “so that they may be able

¹ *Osiris and the Egyptian Resurrection*, vol. ii. p. 100.

² *Woman's Mysteries of a Primitive People*, p. 205.

to see straight before them and soon find the way back to earth."

After the funeral "play" given at the death of a very old man the following rite is added. On returning to the house of mourning, the dependants of the family go down to the nearest spring and draw fresh water. This they throw upon the roof, in such a manner that it falls upon the kinsmen who have meantime taken up a position beneath the eaves. The latter crush eggs, and, after touching their foreheads with these, rub them also over their feet, praying, as the water falls drenching body and garments: "Let us become clean, that the power may be given us to see clearly those things which we should do."

Up to a certain point, added years are looked upon as conferring honour; but among Ibibio, especially the Efik of Calabar, it is possible to outstay one's welcome in life's caravanserai. Sometimes, in a family which contains a very aged member, it is noticed that strong men and women, youths and maids, pine and die off in an unaccountable way: while the ancient man, or woman, sits in the seat by the hearth, powerless to move hand or foot, or to eat any chop save such as is ground fine and placed in the mouth; yet seeming to retain a hold on life, as if death had passed by and would never look back to summon them away.

In such a case the descendants consult together and ask: "How is it that the strongest and most beautiful among us die before our eyes, while this useless and aged one still lingers? Maybe the strength of their young limbs and the breath of their nostrils are drawn out to keep alight the flickering flame of this old life. Let us make an end, therefore, lest we perish one by one."

Then they grind camwood very fine and, approaching the withered figure, fill up one nostril with the powder. Next, taking one of the small wooden or earthen bowls used as enemas, they blow up it through the spout-like aperture, until the aged being "dies softly, softly, for himself."

From this practice a proverb has sprung, and old people who feel themselves neglected by children or kin often ask

reproachfully, "Do you want to blow camwood into my nose and kill me?"

The ceremonies performed on the death of the head chief of Ikotobo may be cited as typical of those of Ibibio of importance. For most of the particulars I am indebted to Mr. Eakin.

The chief appears to have been a remarkable man in every sense, a giant in build, of the finest type and of great intelligence. One day early in 1908, during the dry season, he had gone to his farm, and, while working there, burst a blood-vessel in the head. He was carried home moaning: "Agbo, Agbo," *i.e.* "I die, I die." Soon after reaching his compound he became unconscious, and the people, thinking that he had already passed away, raised the death wail.

The news spread over the scattered farms, and as it reached each, men and women dropped the implements with which they had been working, and started running toward the house of mourning. As they ran they cried: "Akpan Enang is dead." The name means "eldest son of the cow," for the injured man was the chief of the cow totem.

Hundreds of people surrounded the house, while native doctors hurried thither from every direction. With them they brought bush leaves and fruits, which were passed over the chest of the unconscious man, then blown upon through a little bone pipe, feathered at the end, and lastly flung away into the bush. This was done that the illness might be driven out of the sufferer into them, to perish as they were destroyed, leaving him whole once more.

In this case, however, magic proved useless, and it was not until Mr. Eakin, who had hurried to the scene, had applied remedies, that consciousness returned. For a while the patient lingered; but not many weeks later, called his people around him and announced that he was about to die.

From far and near dependants hastened in, armed with guns and matchets to drive off the dread enemy who was attacking their lord. Their zeal proved unavailing, and, early in the morning, he passed away.

The body was washed, and enthroned upon a chair set on a raised platform. According to custom it was robed in the dead man's finest garments, and crowned with the King's Ring, *i.e.* a circle of tie-tie covered with leopard's skin. In one hand a little metal Okung—an instrument like a long flattened bell—was placed, and in the other a wooden drum-stick with which to beat it, as a sign that the dead man entered the spirit world with joy.

Two cows were strangled, and these, together with twenty sheep killed in the usual manner, were laid out before the throne—the cattle exactly in front of the dead body and the sheep on the left hand. To the right, as if to balance the slaughtered animals, crouched the deceased's twenty wives, who, a few years before, would have been buried alive with their dead lord, or slaughtered and flung into the grave.

To those unaccustomed to such sights, it is difficult to describe the arresting horror of the scene when a chief sits in state before burial. In olden days the face of the corpse was hidden by a carved wooden mask, conventionalised enough, but with a certain dignity, imitating, however rudely, the golden burial masks of old Greece. Now we have shown an easier way, and the chief of to-day often sits in state and is laid to his last long rest, with features covered, not by a mask, reverently and sorrowfully carved by one of his own retainers, but by the flimsy 5th of November caricatures, introduced by some enterprising trader.

Every twenty yards, between the house of mourning and the place of burial, the head and blood of a goat, sacrificed for the purpose, were to be seen upon the ground. At regular intervals, too, poles had been raised, and from these hung pieces of cloth, drooping like flags half-masted.

The dead man's wealth was brought into the central court of the compound, and there displayed under guard. In the midst was set a richly carved coffin, hollowed from a single block, and around this, before ten o'clock in the morning, gathered the members of each society to which the deceased had belonged, in order to "play" in his honour. Among these companies that of "Isong," which always gives the last performance, was particularly notice-

able. Every member of this society was covered from head to foot with black pigment, and bore a young palm-leaf in his left hand and a sharp matchet in the right. The musical instruments used on this occasion, in addition to the tortoise-shell "drum" of the cult, were large wooden bells, played by means of a stick with which the outer surface was struck.

At ten o'clock a gun was fired. On this signal, eight of the head-men came forward and seized the empty coffin, which they first carried, dancing and leaping, round the compound; then, after the body had been placed therein, bore it to the burial-ground. Before them went the head priest of "Egbo," wearing a cow's skull—the sign of the dead man's totem.

A deep wide grave had been dug, at the bottom of which rows of men stood waiting to receive the coffin. While this was being lowered, the spectators raised "Egbo cries," and, after it had been set in the centre, the helpers climbed up. Earth was then thrown in and stamped down very hard, to prevent the wandering ghost from coming back to disturb his kin.

Thirteen carved ivory tusks had been brought forth from the house of mourning and laid in the courtyard, amid the other possessions of the dead chief. When the burial ceremonies were finished, these were carried to the home of the deceased's brother, who then became head of the household.

On the occasion described above, the presence of the "white man" was enough to prevent the carrying out of human sacrifices; but there are reasons to fear that at least one slave was subsequently offered up, and buried in the absence of this restraining influence. From the native point of view, the institution of human sacrifice was the greatest, inasmuch as it was the costliest, mark of respect which could be shown to the dead man.

The burial above mentioned differs from that of many chiefs, in that the corpse was laid in a grave the whereabouts of which was known to all, whereas the bodies of people of importance are usually interred privately, and in a secret place.

Often when a chief dies, the fact is concealed from all, save four or five of his nearest kinsmen. Two methods of procedure are open to these. Either they carry the body to a far-away part of the bush, and there bury it secretly, after which they emerge with smiling faces, as if they had been on some pleasant jaunt. For several days they keep up the pretence of visiting the chief, and receiving and transmitting messages from him to inferior folk. Meanwhile they make use of the time to summon distant kinsmen, and prepare everything for the solemnisation of the death ceremonies. For these, hundreds of bronze rods—the favourite currency of the country—are got together, with great bolts of silk, hundreds of silk handkerchiefs, ivory tusks, and manillas in heaps. Cows, sheep and goats are killed and prepared for the feast, and only when all is in readiness is the death announced. Then the women start to wail; a coffin is carried forth, weighted to the amount proper to the deceased, and solemnly interred, though the real burial took place days before.

Another method often employed is to cut down a big plantain stem as soon as the death has taken place. Very secretly this is brought to the house of mourning. Pieces are cut from it and lashed on where arms and thighs should be. Others, cunningly contrived to imitate feet and hands, are added; then cloth is wrapped over all. The whole looks like a mummy, and the spectators are led to believe that it is the body of the dead chief. This effigy is publicly buried; but the real corpse is carried, in secret, to a quiet grave, over which, after a short space, the bush draws its gentle veil. Here long lianes trail their lovely length, while small bush beasts lie sunning, all joined, in kind conspiracy with the dead man's human kin, to screen his last resting-place from the eyes of those who might be driven, by hate or envy, to desecrate the grave, steal the head, or mutilate the corpse, thus strewing stumbling-blocks upon the spirit's road to reincarnation, or robbing it of treasure provided for use in the ghost realm.

That human sacrifices are still looked upon as necessary to the funeral rites of a chief, is proved by a case brought before me in the Native Court at Eket during March 1913.

In this the plaintiff charged another man with the theft of a piece of his property. In the course of the evidence the following statement was made, in the most matter-of-fact manner, as if merely recounting circumstances well known to, and sanctioned by, Government :

"About ten years ago my father died. According to custom, we killed a slave and buried with him. Some years later accused went, opened the grave, and stole from it the skull of the slave. This was my property, and I therefore claim compensation for the theft."

Skulls are very valuable, as every member of the principal secret societies must possess at least one. Just before my return to England, an urgent summons came to try a gang of men, discovered, to quote the words of the Native Court clerk, "in the act of digging out the disease." This mysterious offence proved, on investigation, to be that of "digging up the deceased" for the sake of their skulls: in consequence, a gang of body-snatchers, some thirty strong, was suppressed.

That such desecration is looked upon as a grave crime was proved by a case which came up in Awa Native Court on the 16th of July 1913. In this the plaintiff, Udaw 'Nwa Ikpe, stated on oath :

"Six years ago accused caught hold of his daughter, and wanted to sell her to me as a slave; but I refused to accept the girl under such conditions, and took her as my wife instead. Two months ago she fell ill and died; so I washed and buried the dead woman. A few weeks later her father came and asked me to dig up the body, because he said that I had cut off the head before burial. I therefore took action against him for accusing me of such a crime."

As a general rule among these races, the deaths of the aged are regarded with equanimity. When people hear the news they say placidly, "It is time," and turn their thoughts to ensuring the comfort of the deceased in the ghost world by giving a great "play" and offering many sacrifices. Till the celebrations are over, no one may sleep in the dead man's house, even if the "play" should be kept up from seven to fourteen days. All this time relays

of singers chant ceaselessly. They may relieve one another at intervals, but some must always be awake and singing. This is called "keeping the ghost-house warm."

Should a young man die whose loss is felt very deeply, all the women of his house sit weeping round the coffin from sunset to dawn. None may think of sleep until after sunrise next day, and no member of the family may eat, save surreptitiously, until after the last burial rite is finished.

If one child after another dies in a family—or, as most peoples here say, "The child keeps on dying," since it is thought to be the same soul trying to incarnate—a finger or toe is cut off or the body burnt, so that the troublesome visitor may leave the mother in peace.

The bodies of all those who die from smallpox and other infectious diseases, of witches, women who have died in childbirth,¹ strangers who have none to bury them, and, in some places, murderers, are thrown into a piece of bush reserved for such, called Idiokk Ikott or Ikott Ekkpo. The wraiths of these unburied persons are termed Okpaka Ekkpo or Ekkpo Afai, and are deemed to bear an enmity against all living people, but especially against their particular towns or families, on whom they often send fever, sickness, or accident.²

¹ The body of the babe is not usually cut out of the mother's womb and buried separately, as among some Ibo.

² See also p. 130 *et seq.*

CHAPTER XII

DEATH AND FUNERAL CEREMONIES (*continued*)

BELOW ground, the graves of Ibibio, as of many Ibo, show some resemblance to those of ancient Egypt. In olden days every member of the family, even to its most distant branches, came home for the entombment. A play was given, and after the feast the celebrants went in procession to the place where a deep wide-mouthed round pit had been dug. From the bottom of this an underground corridor, said sometimes to reach a length of thirty feet, led into a square chamber with no other outlet. In this the dead body was laid, and, after the bearers had returned to the light of day, stones were set over the pit-mouth, and earth strewn over all. Many such graves are said to exist at Managu in Aro Chuku District.

Near the Ibo boundary live some people of mixed Ibo and Ibibio blood. These speak both languages, and are called Ibibio 'Nkita. Among them, also, the ceremonies above described are stated occasionally to be carried out after the death of a great chief. Rites of somewhat similar character were customary, until quite recently, among Ibibio in the west of the Eket District. The following account is given on the authority of Mr. Matthews and 'Mbong 'Mfiong Akpabio, Native Court clerk and assistant Court clerk at Awa :

" When a great chief died in this neighbourhood," they stated, " a deep square hole was dug, from the bottom of which a passage was hollowed out, large enough for two men to pass abreast, and ending in a kind of cupboard made in the earth, many feet wide and of equal breadth, but only three to four feet high.

“Should the dead man’s family be rich, the bodies of cows and goats, slaughtered in his honour, were borne thither, and laid at the back of the space thus formed. Were they too poor to provide these and also sufficient meat for the burial feast, only the heads of the victims were laid in the grave, while their flesh was devoured by the guests.

“Next, a woman and man were led along the passage, and made to lie, the first to the right hand, the second to the left, while the corpse was laid between. This was done that the dead chief might not arrive servantless in the spirit world.

“After these had been laid in position, earth was thrown in, passage and anteroom were blocked once more, and living and dead abandoned to their fate.”

It is recorded that one slave sacrificed in this way managed, by pressing against the body of the animals first laid in the grave, to edge himself a little nearer to the aperture than had been intended.

The soil here, as in most parts of the District, is of sand, and no sooner did he feel sure that some feet of earth interposed between himself and those who had sacrificed him thus ruthlessly, than he began to dig away the soft deposit with his hands; then, pushing it downwards, in time pressed it beyond his feet. Thus, while the grave was being filled in, he worked, mole wise, till the end of the passage was reached. Fortune favoured him, for darkness overtook those to whom the task had been entrusted before they could finish the work of filling up the shaft and stamping down the earth over the burial-place. Through the soft sand, therefore, he climbed upward, till he emerged once more to a world of moonlight and sweet air. Through this he fled, and was never more seen in that neighbourhood. When the grave-diggers came at dawn to finish their work, they found the earth disturbed, and, investigating the cause, learnt what had happened. “The news spread over all the countryside, and from that day only women were left alive, since these were held too frail to threaten danger of escape. Male victims were killed, or at least had arms and legs broken, before being laid by the side of their lord.”

Chief Henshaw states that at Calabar, in olden days, graves only slightly different in form were prepared for the interment of chiefs. The following is his account :

“ Within the walls of the dead man’s compound, a rectangular shaft, often twenty-four feet deep, was dug, from one of the sides of which led a short tunnel. At the end of this, a large underground room was hollowed out, whither boxes upon boxes of brass rods were borne and arranged, beneath rich coverings, to serve as a bier. Next a table and some of the finest pieces of household furniture, together with jars, dishes, and bowls of old china, were carried thither and set in order. When all had been arranged, the coffin was carefully lowered down the shaft, borne through the passage and laid upon the resting-place so reverently prepared.

“ Next the best-loved wife of the deceased and two of his most beautiful slaves were led into the chamber and seated upon three chairs at the feet of, and facing, the body. Between living and dead a table was placed, and on this dishes containing fine chop were set.

“ The best-loved wife was in the centre and into her hands a lighted lamp was given.” Then all, save this sad trio, left the burial room. “ Boards were placed before the entrance and earth piled against these until the passage was filled up. Bolts of cloth and the less costly offerings were then laid at the foot of the shaft. Lastly, soil was thrown in and beaten down over all.”

When the burial rites were over, the life of the compound went on as before ; while beneath the feet of those who laughed, wept, made love, or went about their ordinary work and play in the sunshine, the three, who had formerly shared in the general toil and gaiety, suffered a death as lingering and terrible as that of any vestal immured in her living tomb.

According to the testimony of well-known chiefs, many such “ houses of the dead ” are to be found, should one dig deep enough, in those parts of Calabar inhabited in olden days by people of wealth and position.

The rites still carried out for chiefs and members of the highest grade of Egbo—the principal Efik secret society—are of considerable interest.

As with many other Ibibio, the death of such a man is carefully concealed by his family. Five people, near of kin or favourite "members," are chosen out and bidden, in all secrecy, to wash the body. A great play is given, and townsfolk led to believe that the dead man's sickness has taken a favourable turn, and that he will soon be well. No matter how sad are the hearts of those widowed or orphaned, not a tear may be shed; all must go about gaily, playing their parts in this sad comedy.

Possibly the idea underlying Ibibio custom in this matter is not unconnected with the European superstition, voiced, for instance, in the "Ballad of the Dead Babe," who appeared before its mother showing a dripping shroud, and complained that it could not sleep because of her constantly falling tears. Much the same belief would appear to be held by Malays, for, after the last kiss is given by one of the nearest relatives, these may on no account "disturb the corpse by letting their tears fall upon its features."¹

It is probable that, till the funeral rites are over, the grief of those left behind may be thought to affect the dead chief on his way to the ghost realm; just as the wives of Ibibio warriors must wear a gallant air and dance and play, that the courage of their men-folk may thus be sympathetically upheld while upon the war-path. A great point in Ibibio funeral ceremonies is to emphasise the beautiful idea that the dead enter the spirit world with joy. That is why musical instruments are so often placed in the lifeless hands.

When the washing of the corpse is over, it is robed in fine garments and set in an arm-chair. Next, several coral beads are taken, of a size such as, in olden days, would have each cost the price of a man. These are ground up, and the powder thus obtained is rubbed over the face of the dead. Then the largest piece of coral that remains to the family, usually one of those cubes which rich natives buy for their women at almost any price, is inserted between the closed teeth and the cheek, on the right side of the mouth. No reason could be given for this custom save the

¹ Skeat, *Malay Magic*, p. 401.

usual : " Thus it was done by our fathers and therefore we also do it."

The head is shaved in elaborate patterns, such as those in which young girls clip their close-curling hair, and of which such a variety of design was found among the Ekoi.¹ Next, the chin is swathed in folds of the softest and most costly silk obtainable. Red powder, made from the camwood tree, and yellow, formed of Ogokk wood, are brought in, and by this means the body of the dead chief is marked with the signs of the Egbo grades through which he had passed, starting from the lowest. Two of the intermediate grades are usually missed out on this occasion, as, though membership of these is a necessary prelude to admittance into the highest circle, that of 'Nkanda, they are of little importance in themselves. In token that the dead man was initiated into the mysteries of the last-named grade, peacocks' feathers are fixed around his head, forming a nimbus-like crown.

In such state the dead chief sits for an hour or more, while the nearer kinsmen, and men of highest rank in the family, are brought before him, as though holding a last reception. When the visitors leave, a couch is borne in, upon which a mattress, hidden beneath silk coverlets, has been placed. On this the body is laid, its head resting on embroidered pillows, while long lengths of fine silk, placed one over another five, six, or even seven deep,² are drawn over all. More distant kinsmen, and those of lesser importance, are then permitted to pay their respects to the dead.

Meantime, until the vigilance of Government prevented burials within the compounds, a grave fourteen to fifteen feet deep was dug in one of the rooms. Not many years ago this was an almost universal custom in the case of people of wealth and position ; but now it can only be carried out in farm plantations, whither, therefore, many chiefs order themselves to be carried when they feel the first symptoms of approaching death. Boxes of brass rods,

¹ *In the Shadow of the Bush*, p. 318 *et seq.*

² Cf. the seven pieces of cloth laid over the corpses of wealthy Malays, Skeat, *op. cit.*

sometimes as many as fifty in number, form the floor. A coffin was prepared, damask-lined, and with plumes of ostrich and peacocks' feathers at the four corners. In this the dead chief was reverently laid. Under his head, the bottom part of an ancient double pan of beaten brass or copper was placed, while, above, the upper part was set, so that as the head rotted from the trunk, it would fall between the bowls, which would then come together and enclose it. Cords made of long lengths of knotted cloth were placed beneath the coffin, that it might be ready for lowering.

At this point women, children, non-Egbo members, and indeed all but those of the highest grade of the society were sent away. Then, privately, the Egbo Images were brought, especially the one that cries in a voice somewhat like the sound of a bull-roarer, yet different—the secret of producing which none but 'Nkanda members may know. To the sound of this mysterious wailing cry, the coffin is lowered “softly, softly,” while the Egbo laments for his lost son. So soon as the bier is let down to rest upon the boxes, the wailing ceases. The ends of knotted cloth are thrown down. Bolts of silk and cotton, with jars, dishes and bowls of fine china, are laid above. Then the earth is filled in, gently at first, so as not to injure the offerings; but afterwards less and less carefully, till the whole is made level with the floor. When this has been done and the ground beaten smooth and hard, the Egbo Image stands above, voicing his mysterious cry once more, in a last farewell. After a while he departs with all his companions; then the women of the household come back, and, kneeling, smooth the least roughness from above the grave, till the surface looks like that of new pottery.

Next, everything is set in order within the house, and a messenger sent to the less important of the townsfolk, who, till now, had been kept in ignorance, with the tidings, “The chief is ailing.” At once, on hearing this, word flies from lip to lip, for all men know, from this announcement, that he is dead and buried, and all is over.

Next day comes the word, “He is now very ill.” At nine o'clock that night, the wives of those chiefs not related to the house of mourning go, accompanied by their members,

to visit the bereaved family. The more important women enter, while their humbler followers sit outside. The widows receive their visitors seated, rocking to and fro, crying in a low voice, "very soft and pitiful: 'The chief is sick. The chief is sick to death.'" Over the grave a fine cloth is laid, so that all who pass the door of the burial chamber may see—and know.

After four or five days, when even the most distant relatives have learned of their bereavement, the new head of the family announces: "The chief is no more. We will hold the death rites."

A great feast is prepared, and a play given which usually lasts from a fortnight to sixteen days. First of all, the dead man's eldest son robes himself in white cloth and sallies forth with three or four boys, dressed in like garments and each bearing a skull. About a hundred people, armed with guns, accompany him, while he calls aloud the famous deeds of the dead, such, for instance, as: "My father has done great things in this place! He drove back the enemy in time of war," etc. To each statement the people call back: "It is true! It is true!" firing their guns in confirmation. When they have thus processed round the town, they come back to the house of mourning and finish for that day.

In front of the compound, on the opposite side of the main road, a small hut has been built. The floor is of planks, laid some two feet above the ground, and the walls are decorated with paintings and hung with splendid cloths. All these are of ancient stuffs, every one of which has its name and history. An old woman, who is wise in such things, stands pointing out each, and calling it by name. "This," she says, "is called so-and-so. This bears so-and-so's name"; for those who were the first to find a new kind of cloth and bring it into the town, gave their name to it, so that it was thenceforward called after them.

"Inside this little house sits a figure modelled to represent the dead chief. It is made from the finest pottery-clay, and is seated in an arm-chair, just as in life, with big belly and top hat, robed in its costliest garments. Before



HEAP OF BROKEN CALABASHES AND POTS.
(Sacrificed to the "Juju" when Devils were cast out.)



FUNERAL HUT.
(Built for Ghost.)

it a table is set with fine china plates and dishes. Every morning new chop must be cooked and placed upon this. Two of the most beautiful maidens of the household, robed in festal attire, stand to fan the figure, one on either hand. After a certain time they are relieved and may go to rest, but must come back again, in turn, till the end of the burial rites.

“ Within the compound, from the beginning of the sham funeral, kinsmen and retainers, both men and women, were carrying out their share of the customs. All had to weep publicly, and should two people need to leave the compound for any purpose, custom decreed that they must first call upon the name of the dead man before going out, and again before entering.

“ Every chief in the town was expected to have a flag flying in front of his house, and each day, at dawn and evening, cannon were fired—as many as eight at a time for a very great chief.”

Of those invited to be present at the sham obsequies, the Cameroons Ekoi were first summoned. The reason for this precedence was said to be because they dwell farther off than any other. It seems to me, however, that the true reason may be found in a substantiation of their claim that Egbo originated among them. Next, their kin on the British side of the border were bidden to attend, and lastly, the Okkobbor tribe from the north-east of the Eket District ; for these three peoples are supposed to excel all others in the art of giving Egbo dances.

Before the play began, the chiefs of the “ seven tribes of Calabar ” were invited to be present. These tribes consist of (1) Henshaw Town and Duke Town, which on such occasions count as one because they originally were of the same stock, but divided later owing to a disagreement, the details of which may not be made known for fear of wounding tribal sentiment ; (2) Old Town, (3) Creek Town, (4) Adiaobo, (5) 'Mbiaobo, (6) Ikoroffiong and (7) Ikoneto. There is also a “ lost tribe ” of Calabar which was wiped out in the downfall of the great cotton tree that, in their overweening pride of numbers, they thought themselves capable of holding aloft.

For the first ceremony of the long series, the guests assemble at about ten o'clock at night. "Men and boys wearing bells tied at their waists run round the town. More than a hundred of these might be heard ringing and clashing: brang, brang, brang, brang, while their wearers wailed dolefully, E-ku-e-e! To which came the answer caught up by thousands of throats—'E-hé, E-hé, E-hé, E-hé, E-hé!'"

After this, until quite recent times, a strange and interesting ceremony took place.

The eldest daughters of each of the principal families of Calabar came together, dressed like men, in long overcoats and loin-cloths and with male headgear. She who was considered highest in rank and the cleverest and most beautiful among them walked at their head, a live chicken suspended round her neck and a long sceptre in her hand. Fifty to sixty "eldest born" followed her, in like apparel, till they came opposite the principal door of the compound. It was specially stated that the leader of such sad processions must be a brave woman—"one who would not glance timidly round corners nor start back afraid from any danger, but would stand forth boldly before all the people, and pointing her staff toward the dead man's door, recite in a clear voice his proud titles and gallant deeds."

"Kinsmen and retainers crowded to hear the tale of the brave actions which their late chief had performed in his youth. At the recital of the power and beauty which had been his, all wept loudly to think that such an one was lost to the light of the sun."

From dawn till about ten o'clock the sad procession encircled the town, stopping at the houses of relatives, and at the meeting-places of societies to which the deceased had belonged. Especially before the Egbo house did they pause and recount his great deeds in full.

When the sun grew hot, the celebrants scattered to their homes, but so long as the rite lasted, all the townsfolk crowded verandah and street, listening to the recital, honouring the dead chief and impressing upon their children the need to emulate his fame.

The name of this ceremony was Eyet Enwa. To the

grief of many of the principal citizens, who believe that it had a strong influence in inducing Efik youth to imitate the mighty deeds of their forebears, it has now been stopped, by missionary effort, on the plea that such customs are displeasing to God.

Next day the whole town was unsafe for non-members of Egbo. Women and children stayed trembling within their houses, behind closed doors. The 'Nyampke Image ran through the town, bearing green leaves in its hand, with which it proceeded to beat the sham coffin, which, silk-covered and weighted with plantain stem, was brought out for the purpose. When this had been done, a cry went round the town : " In two days' time Egbo will run."

On hearing this, the women and those of the servant class hastened to collect wood, water, and food ; for they well knew that, unless willing to suffer a dearth of such commodities, they must now make plentiful provision for the days to come.

About nine o'clock on the appointed night a cry was heard coming from a long way off, as if from the depths of the bush. Then the members of the society took long chains with which to imprison the Egbo, which was thought to have fled from the town on the death of the chief. Many beat drums, and all ran hither and thither, in a scene of wild confusion, crying : " Here he is ! There he is ! "

Sometimes, in olden days, the Egbo is said to have run to a very far country, the inhabitants of which would keep it, so that it could not return again until a great ransom had been paid for its release.

The seekers ran till they were weary ; calling ceaselessly : " Ekkpe-O-O ! Where is our Egbo-O ? " At times they heard a cry, answering faintly from very far away. Then they ran still faster in whatever direction the voice seemed to come. Long they sought, but, should the spirit still elude them, after midnight they went and called out an ancient woman of one of the ruling families. To her they brought the gift of a white cock, after receiving which she went and stood before the Egbo house. No woman might enter, therefore she remained at the threshold, holding the cock aloft and calling upon the names of the " Great

Ancestors " one by one. " Let not our Egbo be lost to us," she pleaded. " If he be with you in the realm of the dead, send him back ! Oh, send him back ! "

After this appeal, silence reigned, while all stood listening for some sign or cry.

The reason that when their own efforts had failed the dominant sex was forced to entreat feminine aid in order to recover their lost Egbo, was explained as follows :

" They choose an old, old woman to be their advocate, because she is the most fitting representative of that ancient one who founded Egbo." For the Egbo cult was first a woman's society ; but in course of time, men, glorying in their strength, wrested its secrets from those to whom they were first entrusted, and learned to play the rites for themselves. Gradually the usurping male drove out the women so completely that a death penalty was proclaimed for any such who should dare to attempt to pierce its mysteries or even become unwitting intruders upon its rites.

The feminine origin of the cult is a secret, unknown save to very few even among natives, and hitherto, I believe, carefully guarded from the knowledge of Europeans. Later we were fortunate enough to discover that nearly all the principal secret societies were originally feminine cults, and that in olden days among Ibibio, as until yesterday with the Ekoi, woman, not man, was the dominant sex.

Should the ancient crone still call upon the Egbo without result, a libation is poured out before the stone, carved or unhewn, to be found in most Egbo houses. If in the end the call still proves unsuccessful, the old woman is led gently homewards, but usually before going back she cries suddenly : " He is coming "—turning at the same time in a certain direction. She then walks toward the point indicated, holding the cock aloft, calling upon the names of the ancestors and praying : " Send back our Egbo. Send him back. If we have done harm, pardon us ! Keep him not from us in punishment. If he is with you in the ghost realm, send him back ! Oh, send him back ! "

The town is still as death. Not a sound is to be heard save that of the pleading voice, high-pitched and quavering, and the soft thud, thud of the seeker's unshod hurrying feet.

If the Egbo answers, they rush forward and surround the place whence the voice comes ; then move together toward the Egbo bush—the captured spirit supposed to be in their midst. There they “lock him up” by rites which there is no breaking, but the secret of which none but full Egbo members may know.

Then all go home, worn out by the night’s search, to sleep till about ten o’clock the next morning. When they wake, they first bathe and then robe themselves in the costume of the “short tail” dance. This curious appendage is fastened, girdle-wise, round the waist, sticking stiffly out behind.¹

The movements of the dance seem meant to represent swimming. First, the left hand is thrown out as if cleaving the water, then the right. He who gives the most realistic and at the same time rhythmic representation is considered the most graceful dancer. For this ceremony each performer must provide himself with a staff or sceptre, the cost of which is said to be from thirty to forty pounds.

Next morning the full members again meet together and say : “Now we must fetch our Egbo back from the bush where he is chained, to dwell once more among us in the Egbo-house.”

All set forth, clothed in their costliest, but covered over with sheets, so that their finery may not be shown till they come to the place where Egbo is.

Here, in the bush, the “long tail” dance is given. The appendage worn on this occasion is even more strange than the “short tail.” It is fixed on in the same way, but is formed of long canes turned up at the end and finished with peacock’s feathers splayed out fanwise. Feathers are also worn in the hair, and indeed, from many indications, this dance would seem meant to symbolise movement in air, as the other did that through water. Should this supposition be correct, we have here another possible survival of the old ritual bird dances. Once more to quote from the article on Bird and Pillar Worship :

“It may . . . be worth pointing out that in the bird-

¹ Very much like those of the “satyrs” depicted on ancient Greek vases, especially in the wonderful collection at Syracuse.

worship of Egypt the priestess of a bird goddess did actually wear a bird robe," as in the illustration given "of a Carthaginian priestess on a sarcophagus found at Bord-el-Djedid. The priestess wears the dress of the Egyptian goddess Isis-Nephthys; her body is hidden by the two wings of the Sacred Vulture, which enfold the hips and cross in front. The vulture's head appears above the head-dress. The colouring of the feathers is vivid blue . . . in her right hand she holds a bird.

"This bird-dress is not a mere curiosity. It is a ritual fact of the first importance. What is the good of dressing up as a bird unless the bird is a being stronger and holier than yourself, whose divine nature you seek to put on with his feathers?"¹

Since Egbo was originally a woman's cult, while eagles are still worshipped and vultures regarded—by members of the great Idiong society, which among Ibibio, of whom the Efik are a branch, is looked upon as more powerful than the Egbo club itself—as inhabited by ancestral spirits, it is quite possible that in olden days the dress for this "bird dance" represented vulture or eagle. True, the peacock's feathers would seem at variance with this idea, or indeed with the imitation of any indigenous bird; but the feathers of vulture and eagle are still worn for other rites, and it seems probable, as indeed we were told, that they were originally used for this dance also. The colouring of the imported peacocks' plumage naturally struck the native as superior to the old, sombre-hued feathers. It ousted all others as an Egbo sign, and quickly replaced them in pictured representations of bird symbols.

Even in Egypt, as we know from countless enamels and ornaments, as well as from the priestess just referred to, the wings of the sacred vulture were usually represented, not in natural tints, but, with a love of colour keen as that of any present-day black man, of vivid blue.²

To return from these travels far afield to the interrupted description of Egbo rites.

¹ J. E. Harrison, "Bird and Pillar Worship," *Transactions of the Third International Congress of the History of Religions*, vol. ii. p. 155.

² In Part IV. of that admirable quarterly, *Ancient Egypt*, will be found a series of valuable notes under the title "Egyptian Blue."

During this long-tail dance the Egbo is induced to enter a so-called "house," or large palanquin, borne by six men, who walk inside the palm-leaf walls, bearing the light framework upon their heads, while from the floor level hangs a long palm-leaf fringe which sweeps the ground, concealing, as far as possible, the feet and legs of the bearers. No woman may see the mystery within, though on one occasion the Provincial Commissioner, Mr. Copland Crawford, and myself were allowed to part the leaves and glance between—only to find the structure empty.

Hundreds of people march on either side, each waving a palm branch in both hands. Before the so-called "house" walks, first of all, a man of high position, bearing a sceptre, and with a live white chicken hung round his neck. His position was formerly one not only of honour but danger, for behind him follows a man holding the sword called Ika, which he keeps shaking close to the neck of the leader. According to old custom, should the latter stumble or let fall his sceptre, before he could raise himself the blade fell and his head rolled in the dust.

Behind these two follow those of the "free born," who hold positions of power, and are therefore permitted to wear a coronet. In addition, some hold two-headed staves the price of which is said to reach as much as ninety pounds, which at intervals they shake three times in the direction of the portable house. Round their ankles the attendants wear strips of cow-hide thickly sewn with little bells. They dance in couples, while women and non-members, who have gathered together to witness the triumphal return of the Egbo, keep up a running accompaniment by beating the hand over the open mouth, crying at the same time, "O-wo-wo-wo."

"During this procession all were safe. The spirit seemed quiet, and never did anything to terrify or harm the spectators; but as the Egbo shed was neared, 'wise men' used to get their wives and children together and send them away softly, softly. Those, on the other hand, who had 'a bad neck' (*i.e.* were stubborn) stayed on, and to these trouble came at last. Forty yards or so from the club-house, while the people were still singing and beating

their mouths, the voice of the Egbo was suddenly heard to call from the shed. Then the procession fell upon the palm-leaf shelter and tore it to bits. Behold, a wonderful thing! There was nothing inside save the bearers! The Egbo, which, all the way, had been heard crying from within, had now fled invisibly to his home! So soon as his voice sounded thence, 'Nyamkpe Egbo ran out with a long whip and flogged all non-members who had dared remain. A great feast was then given for those who belonged to the society."

Meantime the country people were arriving in their canoes, sometimes two, sometimes three parties in one day, for many members of the Calabar Egbo, who dwell in far-away farms or villages, come back to join in the rites.

Later, all the "Images" went together to the head chief's compound, flogging on their way any non-member found walking in the streets. This state of affairs sometimes lasted from dawn till evening time; but as soon as dusk fell the danger was over. Men and women might then come out in safety. Gifts were now borne to the bereaved family, and the Egbo "Ebunko," dressed in splendid robes, sallied forth to visit them. Before separating for the night, the announcement was made: "To-morrow is 'Nyamkpe day! 'Nyamkpe will go to the bush to-morrow!"

At dawn, therefore, bells were heard ringing in every quarter of the town. Non-members bolted their doors and stayed within, for should any woman or person not belonging to the society be caught outside, there was no help for them. They were put to death on sight.

In the 'Nyamkpe bush, arrangements as to the division of the deceased's property were made by the chiefs, and a very sacred play was given, jealously guarded from all eyes save those of the initiated, details of which it is not lawful to betray to non-members.

When the procession returned to the house of mourning, another "play" was given, and kept up all through the night. Next morning, after time had been allowed for the fetching of wood and water, the announcement used to be made: "To-day Okuakama Egbo is going to bush." Again

warning bells were heard ringing and drums beating, but in a different manner from those played for other grades. In the afternoon Okuakama came back to the house of mourning, and performed according to custom.

Next day it was announced that Oklo, the "Brass Egbo," was going to bush. He usually started about three to four o'clock in the morning, in a canoe splendidly decorated, for the Image refused to embark except in a gaily ornamented boat. No canoes save those belonging to full Egbo members might pass along the river at this time, on penalty of death to those within. In the afternoon Oklo returned, in full state, to the house of mourning.

The last "Egbo" of all to perform was that of the highest grade, 'Nkanda. The Image went to bush at dawn, and every one was allowed to see him on the way back, for he and all his attendants were very splendid. Round him his emblems were borne on long poles and near him walked the bearer of the great hoop, "Ekarre 'Nkanda." While in full view of the people, the Image would usually start to run, and the man who bore the 'Nkanda circle must follow him. After he had run round about five times, women and non-members began to slip away, for they knew what was coming. Up till the sixth round it was safe for all, but at the seventh the Egbo sprang forth. The man with Ekarre 'Nkanda ran after him, but he was very vigorous, and would chase any non-member rash enough to stay, till the latter all but died of exhaustion. In fact, death has been known to result.

Afterwards the company went to the house of mourning and finished all Egbo ceremonies. The Image went back again to his own house, and sallied forth no more for that time. With this, so far as outsiders were concerned, the long funeral rites were at an end.¹

One night towards the close of the ceremonies the whole of the dead man's kin went to some place about half a mile from the town, where cross-roads meet. There they built the "ghost hut" called Oyoho, corre-

¹ The women's share in such celebrations is described in *Woman's Mysteries of a Primitive People*.

sponding to the central Ibibio Ngwumu.¹ This was a small shed, finely painted and decorated. Here they cooked delicate food, and set it out for the refreshment of the dead man's spirit. When the funeral rites were quite over, the "small Egbo" was brought there, and the little house destroyed.

Among some Efik and nearly all other Ibibio, a figure carved to represent the dead man is usually set up within the house of his heir, and to this, at intervals, offerings are brought, that, in weal or woe, his spirit may still watch over his descendants.

With Ibibio and Efik, as with the Greeks of old, a certain amount must be discounted from the splendour of description in all accounts which are of native authorship. Just as the heroes of Homer passed through "shining doors," reclined upon "splendid couches," and drove in "polished chariots," while even the soiled linen borne to the washing by Nausicaa and her maids is spoken of, under the glamour of the poet, as "shining robes," so also might things which from a native point of view may justly be described as "very splendid" or "most costly," seem to us worthy of less magnificent terms. Since ideas of splendour are but relative, unless describing a scene witnessed by ourselves, I have thought better to give it as closely as possible as it appears to native spectators. However we may look upon such things, the way in which the best and costliest of the family possessions are sacrificed to ensure the comfort of the dead in the spirit realm, shows real devotion and a genuine affection for the departed, which, if mistaken in its expression, is worthy of respect.

In all cases reported to us, the dead, no matter of what age, sex, or standing, were carried to burial feet foremost. Proved witches and wizards, as also mothers of twins and other undesirables, might not be borne out by the door, but through a hole purposely broken in the wall. This opening was afterwards filled up, that the unwelcome ghosts might be unable to find their way back again. The same custom prevails in Siam; and indeed it would appear to be a law affecting ghosts and evil spirits the world over,

¹ See p. 143.

that, as they may only depart by the place of entry, so also they may only re-enter by the aperture through which their exit was made :

For devils and for spectres this is law :
Where they have entered in, there also they withdraw.¹

¹ *Faust*, Scene iii.

CHAPTER XIII

SECRET SOCIETIES

THE chief secret societies of the region are *Egbo* (Ibibio "*Ekkpe*"), *Idiong*, *Ekkpo* 'Njawhaw, *Ekong* and *Isong*.

With the first of these I have dealt somewhat fully in my study of the Ekoi,¹ and to the information there collected but little remains to add. That little, however, seems of considerable importance. It is known to few, even among members of high grade, and we are, I believe, the first white people to whom the secret has been confided.

While collecting information concerning ceremonies performed on the deaths of chiefs who had held great positions in the society, it transpired, as recorded in the last chapter, that when the *Egbo* flees the town after such an event, if the surviving members fail to catch and bring him back in triumph, they are forced to enlist the services of an ancient woman from one of the ruling families, at whose call the spirit usually returns. It was explained that this was necessary, because *Egbo* was originally a woman's society.

From another source we learned that the secrets of *Egbo* were brought down to earth, in high and far-off times, by a divine woman, who revealed its mysteries to her terrestrial sisters much as those of the great *Nimm* society were brought to Ekoi women.

Save in the depths of the bush, where many old rites are still carried out whenever there seems a chance of eluding the vigilance of Government, death can no longer be inflicted on women found guilty of trespassing, accidentally

¹ See *In the Shadow of the Bush*. In Eket District there is usually no phallic cut stone pillar before which sacrifices are offered to the Idemm *Ekkpe*, but its place is taken by a small pot filled with water, and a round stone.

or with intention, on places set apart for the carrying out of Egbo ceremonies. Such an execution once happened just before my arrival at Oban, and will be found described among Ekoi customs.

Powerful as is the Egbo society, with Ibibio that of Idiong seems to hold first place, at least among old men. To raise the sum necessary for entering this cult aspirants sometimes reduce themselves to penury and even sell wives and children into slavery. Such a case was brought before me in the Native Court at Eket, when Udaw Ufet Etuk 'Nwa 'Nwa was charged with having sold his wife, Ekkpo Edem Eka, and daughter, Awariku, to an Opobo trader. During the course of the trial the woman deposed on oath as follows :

“ I was living in my step-mother's house at 'Mbioto when Akpan Ude came with a letter. He said to my step-mother : ‘ I will take Ekkpo Edem Eka and Awariku to my house.’ He did not take us there, but landed us at an Opobo beach, where we were sold to a woman whose name I do not know. I escaped during the night, but was unable to take my daughter with me. I ran to the bush, where I slept for three nights. After that I tried to go back to my husband, but Akpan Ude met me on the road, seized me and tied me up with native rope. Then he took me to his father's compound. During the night I escaped again, but this time I did not try to go to my husband, lest I should be seized once more. After a while I reached the town of Ikot Ebio Ekpong, where I stayed about three years. I was afraid to come back to my own town. One day, as I was going to market, my son Udaw Umaw Andem met me and led me to the town of my dead father. All this time Awariku had been at Udi Sam Anipepe's house on Ikot Ebong beach. This was the place to which we were originally taken to be sold and whence I escaped. When we were seized, Awariku was a tiny girl and could only just stand on her feet. I carried her on my back. I feared to return to my husband lest he should seize me and have me sold again.”

One of the witnesses, Akpan Etuk Akpan Adiaha Usere, stated on oath : “ About ten years ago I saw a man bargaining with Akpan 'Nta about the price for which he would sell

Awariku. At length they fixed the sum at twelve hundred manillas. It was I, together with Akpan Ude, who seized the girl and her mother and took them to Opobo beach. Udaw Ufet took the money for which they were sold to pay for his entrance into the Idiong society."

The little girl had been kindly treated. She was a bright, attractive child, and her purchasers probably thought that they could count upon a good dowry for her when old enough to be sought in marriage. So well off indeed was she that, when on the mother's entreaty she was sent for and brought back, she begged to return to slavery rather than live with the mother who was poor and whom she had long since forgotten.

The Idiong initiatory ceremonies are said to bear a strong resemblance to those of Freemasonry. When a man wishes to join it he goes with the head priest of the cult and his own father, should the latter already be a member, into that part of the bush consecrated to the deity. First, a cock must be sacrificed, that Idiong may recognise the desire of the aspirant to enter his society. After this, the father approaches the head priest and begs him to pray Idiong to draw near.

It is strictly forbidden for any non-member to be present at such a ceremony, or even to watch the procession on its way to the sacred bush. An infringement of this rule is fraught with grave danger to the neophyte, as was demonstrated to the satisfaction of the people of Ikotobo only a short time ago.

One of the principal chiefs of the town, who was not a member of the cult, "made Idiong" for his son—*i.e.* he provided the necessary fees and sacrifices for the initiation. Not long after, the boy died, and members gathered round the grief-stricken parent, crying: "You have killed your own son. You followed when we made procession and dared, though an outsider, to partake of the offerings. This has enraged Idiong against you, in sign of which he has struck down your son. Come now and join our society, that the god may be appeased and send no further harm upon you or your house."

The first rite of the series is concluded on payment, by

the father, of nine hundred manillas—*i.e.* about £6—fifteen pots of palm-wine, twenty fowls, twenty sticks on which are strung large dried fish, twenty-three seed-yams and twenty-three cooking yams.

On the next "Idiong Sunday," after the first ceremony, the company meets again, this time in the chief's palaver-house. Libations of mimbo, *i.e.* palm-wine, are poured out and all drink, after which the priest rises and chants :

"Thou, Idiong, art our god. Thou hast the power to give life. We beg thee to bless this earth-child with long life, for he enters the Idiong craft to-day."

All present take up the refrain and dance to the accompaniment of basket- and bell-rattles and also long *okung*—a metal instrument shaped like two flattened bells connected at the top, which is played by striking with a short stick. The dance is sometimes kept up during the whole night.

For his services on this occasion a hundred manillas are paid to the chief priest, while ten must be given to each member before leaving. Next day four hundred manillas must again be paid to the "Head of Idiong," one hundred to the second in dignity, and sixty to each of the other members.

Next "Idiong Sunday" all assemble once more at the same place, and go together to the sacred bush. After which the chief priest calls in a loud voice :

Nkanni ! Nkanni ! Mbun Idiong !
Ancestors ! Ancestors ! Company (of) Idiong !

Yak mbufu idi dia inyong inam owu emmi ndikut Idiong.
Let you come eat and make man this see Idiong.

The flesh of a goat previously sacrificed is then strewn upon the ground, together with an offering of dried fish. After a few moments the priest calls :

Eddi-ekka uterre idi, ndienn eddi idiongaw naw fi ete
If vultures come, then is sign to you father
mfo inemm esset koro afo eyum ndimumm
your pleased at heart because you wish to join (*lit.* catch)

Idiong.
Idiong.

He continues after a slight pause :

Eddi-ekka Abassi Idiong inammka essett ye afo, muterre
 If God Idiong not pleased at heart with you, vulture
ikamika ndiwara.
 is not able to come forth.

In country such as this, where vultures abound, it is not often that these keen-scented birds fail to appear in answer to this invocation ; especially as offerings are frequently spread upon the spot. Should they not come, however, the priest announces :

“ Your ancestors are displeased. You cannot therefore become Idiong man to-day. Go home and offer a goat in sacrifice, that their anger may be appeased.”

After such an announcement, all go sadly back to their houses and meet again on the next Idiong Sunday. The ceremony must be repeated at intervals of seven days, until the birds at length appear. When the first are seen, winging their way toward the sacrifice, a shout is raised : “ Look ! Our fathers are coming ! ”

On this all present begin to dance, uttering cries of joy, playing rattles and striking *okung*. The largest vulture is called the “ Etubum Idiong,” *i.e.* the chief messenger of Idiong, and it is thought that his arrival signifies the approval of the deity.

While the birds are feeding, the aspirant’s body is rubbed over with yellow powder. The head priest then stands forth, holding a yam-pounder in his right hand. With his left he takes the hand of the man and announces : “ I am about to kill you now ! ” Then with increased solemnity he continues : “ Close your eyes.”

Next, amid breathless silence, slow-falling, come the words, “ Thou—art—dead ”—upon which the neophyte staggers and appears about to fall. The other members seize the wrists of the supposed corpse, drag him to the local club-house and fling him to the ground, in a space marked off by a row of impaled tortoises, from end to end of which stretches a semicircle of plantain leaves. Over the body a cloth is laid, as with one prepared for burial, and all sit sadly around as though mourning the

dead. After a while one of the number rises and goes out. He searches until a small plantain is found, which he then cuts down and bears back to the chamber of mourning.

The head priest places native pepper in his mouth, chews it, and then ejects it over the tree, saying : " This plantain has now power to revive our brother."

It is perhaps worth remarking that, according to general Ibibio belief, plantain trees, in the hands of powerful Juju men, have the power of recalling the dead to life. One near death too may sometimes be revived if a very powerful magician climbs upon the roof of the house, as near as possible to the place beneath which the sick man lies. Seven strokes of the plantain stem must be struck against the roof, while after each the patient's name is called. To every call the sufferer must answer : " Ekpenyon—O—O ! Ekpenyon—O—O ! "

In Idiong rites also the stem is beaten seven times against the ground at the feet of the supposed corpse. Immediately after the seventh stroke the man rises, whereon the chief whispers into his ear some prophecy supposed to have been learnt during his sojourn in the realm of the dead. This the neophyte carefully repeats. It is usually of a very vague nature.

Next, all adjourn to the father's house, where a feast is spread, that the new-born may eat and be strengthened on his return to earth-life, after the strain of the terrible journey which he is supposed to have undergone. When the meal is finished, the whole company goes back to the sacred bush, giving " Idiong calls " and beating *okung* all the way, to warn non-members, so that none should inadvertently witness the procession.

The most solemn moment of all has now arrived. The chief priest disappears amid the trees, where the shadows lie darkest, and re-emerges walking very slowly, a human skull in his outstretched hands. At this sight all present raise a shout of joy :

" Idiong has come ! We have seen him ! "

The skull is then presented to the new member with the words : " This is your god. Within it Idiong dwells. He

will give you power to see into the other world and to know the cause of sickness and of all trouble."

The skull is then borne home to be reverently laid in a place set apart until, after the completion of the rites, a special shrine can be built for it. This must be within the house, and can only be prepared by one of the older members, who demands a heavy fee for the service. After the skull has been set in its temporary resting-place, the company adjourns to the father's compound, where they prepare for the last ceremony of the long day.

A feast has meanwhile been spread in the so-called "Town-playground," while at every cross-road leading thither sacrifices have been offered. The head of the neophyte is again rubbed with yellow powder. A basket, covered with brightly coloured cloth, surmounted with an Idiong ring or crown, is lifted to his head. The procession then sets forth to encircle the town, pausing at every cross-road to hold basket and cloth, canopy-wise, above the new member. When each sacrificial spot has been passed, Idiong calls and cries are again raised and continued until the playground is reached. Here each present takes Tombo in his mouth from jars set ready for the purpose, and ejects it over the new companion. Then, after partaking of the feast, all return home.

Next Idiong Sunday they again gather together for the final ceremony of the long series—the rite of "the opening of the eyes."

The new member stands once more in the centre of a ring of spectators. Seven circles, called "the seven steps," are drawn on the ground, and as the man sets his foot in each, the head priest passes a knife over his right eye, pretending to cut it, each time asking, "What do you see?" Meanwhile the blood of a cock, previously sacrificed, is poured on the head of the neophyte, so as to flow over the eye, and thus give verisimilitude to the ceremonial cuts.

On placing foot within the seventh circle the man cries, in a glad voice: "Now I see!" After which he again repeats some vague prophecy whispered into his ear by the priest. On one occasion the announcement was: "I see a man who is about to die in a neighbouring town!" After

this the first Idiong crown is placed upon his head. This is a ring made of twisted tie-tie, dyed with the blood of a cock sacrificed for the purpose. The ornament is always worn out of doors, and is a sign of admittance to all privileges belonging to the lowest grade of the society.¹

Before leaving home on the first day after becoming a member, two circles are usually drawn round each eye; the outer of yellow paint, and the inner of white chalk. This is done to impress passers-by with his supposed newly-acquired occult power; for all who see him exclaim: "That man has received the gift of second sight!" Sometimes, too, pepper is rubbed into the eyes to make them blood-shot; for among Ibibio "seeing red" signifies the power of clairvoyance.

The Abia Idiong, diviner or magician priest of the cult, before attempting to deliver any oracle, lays a pair of rattles on his right hand, and an *okung* on the left. In front of him a "thunder stone" is set, and before this a pot containing the skulls of a monkey and cat, with feathers and skull of the fish eagle and some pieces of bright stone or looking-glass. Before attempting to prophesy he prays:

"Eyes of monkey! Eyes of cat! Eyes of fish eagle! Enable me to see clearly that which I would know."

The flat bean of a leguminous tree, with a small hole drilled through the centre, is placed in the diviner's mouth and others in the nostrils in order to disguise his voice when prophesying. Oracles are usually delivered in the dark shrine built in the houses of most men of high standing in the society. On a raised platform, before the ancestral images, sits the diviner, chanting invocations and calling up all the great Idiong spirits to make the future clear to his eyes. Such a shrine we were privileged to visit in the home of Chief Inaw of Ikotobo, a man high in the ranks of the cult.

On stepping over the threshold of sun-baked clay, in the centre of which the skull of an anthropoid ape was embedded as a charm to ward off evil influences, we found ourselves in a dark little chamber where the Idiong insignia were set out. Behind a group of carved figures a small

¹ From a distance it looks much like a Zulu Induna's head-ring.

door was to be seen, leading to an inner shrine in which the chief believes that he is privileged to hold communion with the spirits of his ancestors. He told us that this was possible because, while undergoing initiation into the mysteries of Idiong, he had been sent to the spirit world in order to commune with the ghosts—a power which had remained to him after his return to earth-life. He related how on one occasion, while yet a young man, he had been greatly angered against a member of a neighbouring tribe who had slain his brother, and therefore entered the Idiong shrine to consult the spirit of his father as to the best means of obtaining vengeance. The Shade appeared; but, instead of the hoped-for advice, repeated only the words: “Do not kill! Do not kill!” in so solemn a tone that Inaw had not dared disobey, but obediently gave up all attempts to avenge his brother.

The man’s tones, hushed and reverent, as those of one speaking in some great cathedral, were such as to impress an unbiassed hearer with the sincerity of his belief in these ghostly visitants. The incident brought vividly to mind a description given by Major Leonard of his visit to a somewhat similar shrine.¹

Inaw himself is a mine of folk-lore and strange beliefs, which he is only too pleased to impart to those Makara Etubom, *i.e.* White Chiefs, who ask in order to understand, not mock at, thoughts and ideas so different from their own.

A second great society is that of Ekong, the War God. This is so powerful that it is a commonplace to say: “No man, however rich, is regarded as a chief in his town until he has joined it.” Up to quite recent years the ceremony about to be described was necessary before a new member could be admitted. Even now it is by no means sure that similar rites are not carried out in remote bush towns or on the shores of hidden creeks.

The following account was given by Idaw Imuk of Idua Eket, half-brother to the chief whose brow is always bound with the sacred white fillet, and son of a woman whose soul is reported to dwell in a climbing palm at Afa Atai.

“When a chief wished his son to join the Ekong Society,

¹ *The Lower Niger and its Tribes.*

he chose out a woman from among his slaves, or purchased one from another town or tribe. Her he led to the place set apart as sacred to the deity. This spot was called Isu Abassi, *i.e.* the Face of God, or sometimes Isu Abassi Ekong, the Face of the War God."

In the neighbourhood of Awa, we were informed, Oronn people were always chosen for this purpose, "because they are not of our nation, and the Idiong priest bade us choose these that we might not shed the blood of our own people." If it was not possible to buy an Oronn woman, the neophyte had to purchase the mummified head of some former victim, the preparation of which will be described later on. For such heads the price of a live slave was exacted.

Once arrived in the sacred enclosure, the unfortunate victim was given over into the hands of the priest. So soon as she saw the place, she knew that there was no hope for her. The apathy of despair, which is so peculiarly the heritage of black races, descended and enveloped her. Tearless, or with silent tears slow-falling, she moved toward the priest, unresisting always, since of what use to struggle when relentless Fate has seized and holds one fast? About her round throat—for only young and beautiful women might be offered—a cord was flung and tightly drawn, so that she died by strangulation. No blood might flow, for this was a warriors' society, and the victim was offered to the war god that he might rejoice in her agony and accept it as the price of his aid to the youth who to-day entered the ranks of fighters, so that no drop of the latter's blood need be shed to appease the thirst of the deity.

So soon as the dark eyes of the victim had closed for ever and the brown limbs lay still, a long straight branch of some hard-wood tree was brought forward. The priest took a matchet and sharpened the end to a fine point. This was then driven through the skull of the corpse, straight down the body, and out, far beyond the feet. Afterwards, those present raised up the pitiful burden, and drove the stake deep into the ground, so that the trophy stood firm, "for a warrior may not flinch before his foes." The body was set with its back to the bush and its face towards the Juju, but far off. In front of it a little fence was made.

"Then chop was cooked, and each member of the club received his portion in a bowl, and, sitting down before the fence, ate of it and was glad."

For seven days a feast was held, with dancing and playing, but on the eighth they took down the body, cut off the head, cleaned it, and, unless it was going to be mummified, bore the skull in triumph to the house of the head priest, while the remains were thrown into the bush to rot. By the law of the society, the bodies of sacrifices such as these might never be buried.

A more elaborate way of preparing the head was, so soon as it had been severed from the trunk, to lay it in a shallow hole dug in the sand. Above this, every day, a fire was made and "chop" cooked, so that the heat reached through the thin layer of earth and dried the skull. Such was the method of preparing the substitutes demanded from aspirants who were unable to procure a live victim. Only perfect specimens might be accepted, for, if the hair had begun to fall out, though never so little, the offering would be refused by the war god.

When all had been done as ordained, the members went back and rested for a time. Seven days later they went together down to the spring and bathed, then returned to their homes, donned the insignia of the society, and went in procession to the market-place. After parading there a while, they came back to the club-house, bearing pots of palm-wine. A great dance was given, which lasted all day and night, till dawn broke again. So soon as the first ray struck upward from the east, the neophyte, in whose honour the feast had been held, was acclaimed a full member of the society. Afterwards all went home to rest.

At the time of the new yam harvest the members of Eking assemble for an interesting ceremony. Across the corner of one of the town "play-grounds" a line of forked sticks is driven into the earth. This is so arranged that, at beginning and end of the row, a great tree may usually be seen. Between each two supports, at the height of about four feet from the ground, palm leaves were hung, and against the terminal tree on the left-hand side was to be seen a little arbour made of the same leaves.



CHIEF INAW OF IKOTOBO, WEARING THE CROWN
OF THE FAMOUS IDIONG SOCIETY.



PALM-LEAF HUT, IN WHICH SITS THE "MOTHER" OF EKONG
DURING THE CELEBRATION OF HIS RITES.

Over the fence thus formed each of the younger members of Ekong must spring before being allowed to take his seat on the farther side among those who have made good their claim to a place of honour. Young girls who have been confined to the Fattening-house for the last months parade before the barrier, robed in their finest, "for it is to the warriors that such maidens should first show themselves, at harvest-time." While these walk up and down, a member of the society, chosen on account of his sweet voice, sits singing in the little arbour of palm leaves. He is clothed in woman's garments, and represents *the Mother of Ekong*, "for unless the latter be present at such a ceremony, no blessing can be expected during the coming year."

So far as could be ascertained, Ekong, like Akpan 'Njawhaw and Obumo himself, had no father, but sprang, in full strength, from beneath the heart of a virgin. Until quite lately, human victims were offered to the war god at the time of the feast of the first fruits, and, even now, it is hardly probable that the utmost vigilance has succeeded in thoroughly stamping out this practice.

Just before the new yam harvest, mysterious crimes, the victims of which are usually decapitated, still occur, and it was reported that, upon the beaches of a neighbouring District, headless corpses are washed up by the tide, in greater numbers than usual, at this time of the year. The market value of the skull alone is enough to account for the fact that head-hunting is not yet a thing of the past!

In the Isong Society may be found a survival of the cult of Gaia, pure and simple, and, of all the deities in the Ibibio pantheon, Mother Earth is, in a way, nearest and dearest. "When anything wrong happens in a town, throughout the land," so we were told, "the people of that place go at once to the Isong shrine to discover the cause of the trouble. When the oracle has spoken, the chiefs judge the palaver and inflict a fine, in goats or manillas, upon the wrong-doer. Should the latter be unable to pay, or refuse to do so, the members of the society go in a body to his house and tear off the roof, carrying it away to the Isong shed. The full name of the cult is Ekkpo 'Ndemmm

Isong, *i.e.* the Spirits of the Earth Juju." Women and non-members may never see any of the sacred plays, and in old days the transgressor, witting or unwitting, of such a tabu was slain. The Idemm symbol or image consists of palm-leaves tied seven times and surmounted by a skull.

The chief play is given at the time of new yams. During processions, most of the members hold tortoise-shells, which they beat with a short stick. The leader blows a great horn, and all the others strike the shells drum-wise in answer.

The tortoise is pre-eminently the sign of Mother Earth,¹ as is "crab" of the goddess of the waters. Within the Egbo shed of Jamestown a great drum is to be seen, carved at either end with one of these two symbols of the spirits of earth and sea.²

When a member of Isong dies, the whole society comes to carry out the rites. They it is who always give the last play at a funeral, for, at once on their arrival, all women and non-members must leave. To the beat of these curious drums—following, afar off, in the footsteps of Apollo, who was, so we learn, the first to draw music from the shell of this "strange sweet beast"—with mournful trumpetings, the dead is borne to his last resting-place in the arms of Mother Isong.

¹ During the course of a study of the Ibo and neighbouring tribes a further meaning for the tortoise as a symbol of the feminine sex has come to light. This is discussed in "Some Nigerian Fertility Cults."

² *Vide* drawing on p. xi.

CHAPTER XIV

SECRET SOCIETIES (*continued*)

EKKPO 'NJAWHAW, ETC.

OF all Ibibio secret societies the most mysterious and terrible is perhaps that known as Ekkpo 'Njawhaw, *i.e.* Ghosts (or devils, for the word Ekkpo may be used with either meaning), the Destroyers. The society is sometimes called Akpan 'Njawhaw, *i.e.* Eldest-born Destroyer—the reason for which name will be given later.

Every missionary who has spoken to us on the matter expressed the conviction that the meaning of the words was "baskets full," and, owing to respect for their opinion, I made inquiries from at least a dozen independent sources, every one of which, all unknowing of the information given by others, agreed in saying that the true meaning was the one first mentioned ; but that the words Akpan Ajawhaw, *i.e.* "baskets full up," were so easily mistakable, that even some natives, unconnected with the cult, believed this to be the real name.

My attention was first drawn to the power exercised by the society in the following manner. One early June morning a woman appeared before me, bearing a bundle bound round with native mats. Tears were pouring down her cheeks as she knelt to unfold her burden, the contents of which were gruesome enough ; for they consisted of charred sticks and new-burnt human bones.

According to her account, the deceased was her brother and had been a member of Ekkpo 'Njawhaw. Some few days before, he appears to have quarrelled with a man of higher rank in the society. The latter was thought to have

put Juju upon him, for he fell sick and, later, disappeared altogether. In answer to the sister's anxious inquiries, a man is stated to have led her into the bush, and, pointing to a still smouldering fire, "There," said he, "is all of your brother that you will ever see."

Now, according to the account given by witnesses in this case, the laws of the society ordain that the remains of members must be buried in a secret place, and knowing this, the woman crept back, when her brutal informant had disappeared, and gathered together a few bones and sticks which she brought as evidence in support of her story. She pleaded that the man whom she looked upon as her brother's murderer should not be allowed to go unpunished.

All whom she named as likely to know anything about the matter were summoned to give witness, but such was the power of the cult that each denied knowledge of the affair. Nothing could be proved save that the man had disappeared. It was not even possible to set at rest the poor woman's agonized doubt as to whether her brother had been burnt alive, or only his dead body given to the flames. Lest the former supposition should be thought incredible, it may be well to give an experience told by Captain Johnston of the Southern Nigerian Police, who was staying with us at the time.

While stationed at Ibadan, hardly two years before, he was going his daily round, accompanied by a medical officer, when heart-rending cries and groans fell upon their ears. Led by these, the white men came upon an appalling sight. An old woman was chained over a slow fire, and, from the state of her charred body, must have been in that position for at least twenty-four hours. All round her lay dry branches, tipped with tow and saturated with oil, from which it was obvious that the fire had been carefully tended by spectators, who only scattered on the approach of strangers.

Of the lower limbs nothing remained but charred stumps ; yet, hideous to relate, the victim was fully conscious. She was at once removed from her place of torture and tended with every care ; but unfortunately could give no account of the cause of the dreadful rite.

When she had a little recovered, all the inhabitants of the countryside, on whom it was possible to lay hands, were paraded before her, in the hope that she might be able to point out the instigators of the outrage. For some time she showed no sign of recognition, but suddenly, as a youth of about sixteen was led by, she made a clutch at him, twined her scarred arms round his body, and dragged him down until she could rub her face against his.

The woman was a leper, and it was thought that she sought to avenge herself by communicating this terrible disease to one of her enemies—possibly a near relation of the priest or chief, to whose instigation she owed the anguish of those long hours of torment.

Another Ibibio society which was reported to be in the habit of burning its victims existed, until yesterday, at Akaiya, a town on the Cross River in the north of the District. The name of the cult was 'Nka 'Nditaw, and, according to information given before the Native Court at Idua Oronn in July 1912, a summary of its customs ran somewhat as follows :

“ This society consisted of the free-born alone, and used to hold meetings in the palaver house, where members arranged to hide themselves in the bush and kill those who chanced to pass by. A short time ago they burned one man. The head of the cult is Chief Ubong Afia. The Jujus belonging to it were destroyed ; but have since been put up again.”

During the course of the trial one of the defendants was asked what was the result of invoking the aid of the society against any one ; to which he replied : “ The man against whom it was hired was killed.”

To return to Ekkpo 'Njawhaw—

Although all the witnesses in the case cited declared that the bodies of those who had joined Ekkpo 'Njawhaw must be laid in a grave the whereabouts of which was concealed from non-members, others have since stoutly denied this, and maintained that only Idiong men are buried in secret. All, however, agree that, when an Ekkpo 'Njawhaw member dies, no woman may witness the burial, because songs are sung on this occasion which it is not lawful for any such to hear. All, therefore, from the smallest maid to the most

ancient of crones, tremble with fear when the bearers come to carry away the corpse, and keep within the house of mourning, behind shut doors, until told that the last rite is finished and they may once more venture abroad.

From many lips, and in far-sundered parts of the District, we heard of the following ceremony :

" At certain times of the year, members of Ekkpo 'Njawhaw used to assemble in the town market-place. Through their midst was driven a slave, who was afterwards bound to a stout stake. Then the young men used to stand round and shoot at him until his body was black with the powder."

Before men learned to handle guns, such unhappy victims were made targets for arrows, and only when the flesh had ceased to quiver as the cruel darts fixed themselves within it, did the " Image " of Ekkpo 'Njawhaw put an end to the day's festivity, by striking off the head amid the acclamations of the crowd which had come together, from far and near throughout the countryside, to behold the sight.

The object of this sacrifice was to bring trade to the market. When a chief wished to open a new one near his town, he made use of similar means. A message was sent to summon the people of the neighbourhood to assemble on a certain day in the space which had been cleared for the purpose. Goats, yams and plantains were cooked and served, and much palm-wine given. A fetish often, though not invariably, belonging to the Ekkpo 'Njawhaw cult, was set up, and before this a stout stake might be seen, firmly driven into the ground.

After all the guests had feasted, a woman was led forward and tightly bound by throat and ankles to the post. Her waist and arms were left free that no difficulty might be placed in the way of a man stationed near by, with a sharp matchet, to show his skill as executioner. First he severed, at a blow, each arm from the shoulder, then by a third stroke cleft the trunk from the throat downward.

We have been told, over and over again, sadly enough, that this ceremony was most efficacious in securing prosperity to a new venture, and that no such good results can be hoped for now that a fresh market has to depend for its

success, not on the favour of "Juju," but solely—through what is regarded as an annoying prejudice on the part of white rulers—on the quality and price of the goods set out for sale in its stalls.

Before an Ekkpo 'Njawhaw play can be given, members go out and pluck a certain grass, supposed to possess magic properties, which they boil until it becomes so dark as to be almost black. This they plait together and make long fringes, joined to form a circle. Two of these they fling round their necks, so that each hangs over one shoulder and beneath the other, crossing at back and breast. Usually a third hangs down the back and a fourth round the waist, producing a somewhat ballet-skirt effect.

The feet of the players are rubbed with chalk and a deep black band is drawn above their knees. The back, from throat to base, is also painted with black pigment. The faces of the dancers are covered with wooden masks—surely the most hideous conceivable, for they are made of black wood, and those of the principal performers are carved in the shape of a skull. Sixty to one hundred members take part in every play. It is easy to obtain large numbers, since every young man wishes to join the society. Matchet in hand, they dance to the sound of many tom-toms, jumping and leaping as if possessed, till suddenly one of their number breaks rank and, standing in the midst, shakes lifted foot or hand. On this signal, dead silence ensues, and all the celebrants stand rigid, as if carved out of stone.

The information above given seemed to show that the society was one which would repay study, not only from an anthropological standpoint, but also because it is difficult to give adequate protection to helpless members of the community without as full a knowledge as possible of the methods of such associations.

Subsequent inquiries brought out the unexpected fact that the powers of evil are thought by Ibibio to owe their being to a dread virgin, Eka Ekkpo, Mother of Ghosts (or devils). "Two sons she bore, by her own might alone, Akpan 'Njawhaw, the First-born, and Udaw, the Second-born." Next came the daughters, Adiaha and Angwa-

Angwa. From these five the whole race of evil spirits is said to have sprung, and all ghosts own their sway.

The lesser festival of the cult is held at the planting of farms, while the greater rites are carried out at harvest-time. It is interesting to note that, in classical times, too, there was a close connection between ghosts, seed-corn, and the garnered grain. Indeed, both with Greeks and Romans, one of the chief duties of ancestral spirits seemed to be that of watching over the eternal round of Panspermia and Pankarpia, and guarding the seed-corn in the sacred Mundus. Much the same idea seems to obtain among the Ibibio of to-day, as propitiation of these terrible rulers of the ghost realm must be carried out both at seed-time and harvest.

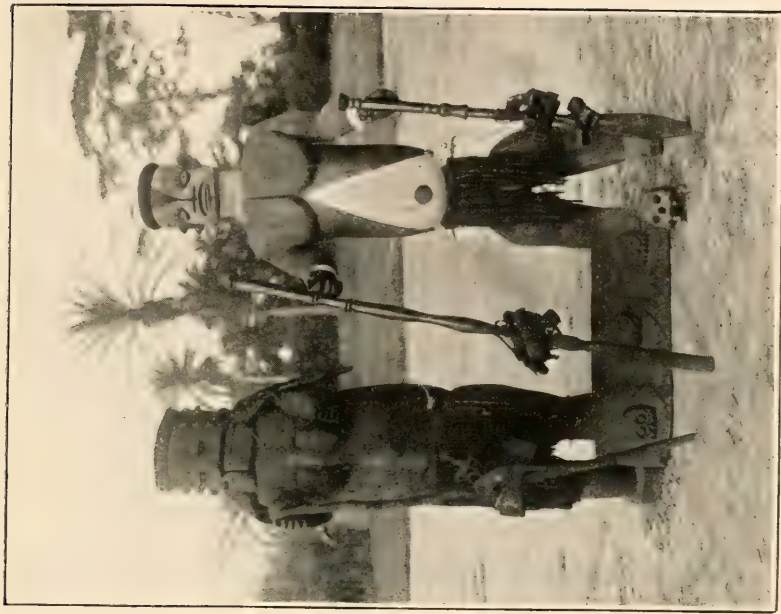
Eight days before the first of the new season's crop may be eaten, in every town where this society holds sway, a functionary, whose title is Udokk Ekkpo, *i.e.* the Ghost's Door, sallies forth, bearing a rattle in his right hand and a palm leaf in his left. He goes as a kind of advance-guard, to warn people that the Ekkpo fetishes will be brought forth on the morrow. Another messenger, sent out about the same time, carries the Uten Ekkpo, a carved stick borne as a sign that the chief feast of the year is about to be held. 'Nda Usung, *i.e.* the Watcher of the Road, is the title of a sentry who mounts guard while other 'Njawhaw members clear a spot for the reception of the fetishes.

Next day the effigies, called Njenn Nsekk, "Small Children," are carried in procession from the Ekkpo shed to the public square, where they are set up. In the midst of her family stands the life-sized, coal-black figure of Eka Ekkpo, with a son on either hand. Each evening, for a week, offerings of fowls and goats are made to the deities, who are supposed to feed upon the essence of the sacrifices, while the club drums are beaten in a continuous muffled roll to warn off trespassers. At the end of this time the Ekkpo figures are borne back, and, while upon the road, in olden days, one or more human victims were usually secured.

The method of providing such sacrifices was for all the "Images," *i.e.* masked men robed in the club dress, to



ONE OF THE "IMAGES" OF EKKPO 'NJAHLAW.



EKA EKKPO NJAHLAW, WITH HER ELDEST SON
AKPAN EKKPO 'NJAHLAW.

chase any passer-by, striking him as chance served with their matchets, until the wretched man fell dead of exhaustion. The head was struck off and wrapped round with leaves, then placed between the hands of the principal "Image," who bore it proudly in front of the "Great Mother" for the rest of the way.

During the harvest festival, before a man might pass through the square where the fetishes were set up, he had to pay an annual tribute of a hundred and twenty manillas, *i.e.* about fifteen shillings. For two hundred manillas he might, though an outsider, enter the Ekkpo shed and eat and drink with members of the society.¹ When an associate has also paid entrance-fees on behalf of his son, he is thought to have greatly waxed in importance, and other members say to him: "You are a big man now, and fit to learn the inner secrets of our cult."

Of all the palm nuts in the Awa region, none might be cut save by a member of Ekkpo 'Njawhaw, and, from a case which came before the Eket Native Court, it appears that, in this part too, the custom still holds. In the course of evidence given on this occasion, Thompson Edogho stated on oath:

"In olden times, if a man had not joined this society, he could not cut any palm nuts. Even now, in our day, the law is still binding." Since the wealth of the District consists principally in its palm-oil, some idea as to the power of the cult may be gained from this fact.

Beside the two principal feasts already mentioned, lesser ceremonies are carried out on special occasions; such as when a chief falls sick, and a play is given in order to call in the aid of ancestral spirits to keep him alive, or again for the punishment of offending members. Should any one have sinned against the rules of the society, the "image" Akpan Ikpe, *i.e.* First-born of Judgment, comes forth at the head of all those who belong to the cult. He wears the usual ceremonial dress, together with a wooden mask carved in some terrible shape. In his left hand he

¹ The Idemm Ekkpo 'Njawhaw—the tutelary spirits of the club as well as the souls of all dead members—is usually represented by a clay pot of water, with Akwa posts some six feet high tied round with palm leaves.

bears an okung bell and in his right a stick with which to beat this gong-wise, thus calling the attention of the townsfolk to the fact that a member has offended, and is about to be punished.

Behind march confederates, beating tom-toms and chanting threats of destruction, till the house of the guilty party is reached. There the image starts to cry the Ekkpo call, a terrible and mysterious sound, which is taken up by all who have come together to witness the punishment of the offender. At a given signal, members of the society fall upon the dwelling and raze it to the ground, utterly destroying the property of the guilty man. Some assert that it is from this ceremony that the cult takes its name of "The Destroyers"; but from an overwhelming number of trustworthy accounts it would appear to be derived from deeper and more terrible causes.

The Great Mother herself, Eka Ekkpo 'Njawhaw, is not present at such subsidiary rites, but stays alone in the "house of honour." She is never impersonated by an "Image," though men, robed in the cult garments, take upon themselves to represent her offspring. At these secondary plays, first a man impersonating Akpan runs out, followed by one representing Udaw; next comes the "Image" of Adiaha, and lastly the one supposed to personify Angwa-Angwa. A non-member meeting them upon the road had, in olden days, little chance of life.

The feast of new yams is held in September, and early in the month complaints began to come in from missionaries as to attacks upon school children quietly passing along the public roads. Such crimes seemed particularly rife in the neighbourhood of Awa, but stress of work prevented me from going up at once to investigate as one would have liked to do. Court Messengers were therefore sent to summon the men, against whom the heaviest complaints were made, to come down and answer the charges.

According to one account, the cult images met a man named Akpan Orok on the public road near Ikot 'Nkan, and assaulted him in a very dangerous manner, saying: "If this were not Government time we would have killed you with our matchets." On hearing cries, many people

ran up, and a Christian, Solomon by name, asked : " Why do you hit this man and hold him ? Do you wish to kill him ? " To this one of the " Images " replied : " Go back to your place. We have power to do as we choose in our town."

Another witness stated : " The society was playing in the public street of the town when Akpan Orok chanced to pass by. During such a play all non-members are forbidden to come outside the houses. When they saw Akpan, they asked : ' Did the white man give you permission to come out while we were holding the rites of Ekkpo 'Njawhaw ? ' After this they struck at him with matchets and threw him down upon the ground."

From the majority of complaints it appeared that the members of a club at Ikot Iko Ibun, a small town near the Opobo border, had been the worst transgressors and had seriously injured a girl and some schoolboys on their way to church one Sunday. Court Messengers William and Udaw Atiata were therefore sent to serve summonses on the chiefs of the society. The following is a summary of what happened, as related before the Native Court at Awa on September 6, 1913.

Court Messenger William stated on oath : " About two weeks ago I went with a warrant to arrest the members of Ekkpo 'Njawhaw Club, who had assaulted Adiaha Usin. First I called Chief Ikpe 'Nwa Etuk. He came outside. Many people were in the club-house. He asked : ' Who called my name ? ' At the same time he took a stick and hit Court Messenger Atiata who was with me. Many members surrounded us, shouting : ' Neither of you can go back to-day.' Ipke 'Nwa Etuk said to his people : ' These Court Messengers and the District Commissioner think that they have power in our town ; but they cannot do anything here ! ' On this, a man, Ukpong by name, who was friendly disposed, came behind me and whispered : ' Do not try to run away, else they will kill you.' A few minutes later, two men came up with guns with which they behaved in a threatening manner."

Another witness named Akpan Essien, sworn, stated : " I saw the two Court messengers come with a warrant of

arrest. Chief Ikpe hit Udaw Atiata. I also heard him shout to the people: 'Come out! All of you get ready your matchets and guns.' He said, too: 'The District Commissioner has no power here. No Commissioner has sought to interfere with us up till now, and we do not want to have anything to do with White Rule.' Many people came out and surrounded the Court messengers, threatening to kill them if they tried to arrest any one."

Moses Essien gave confirmatory evidence on oath, and added: "After the Court messengers had gone, the accused sent for the chiefs of the neighbouring towns, Ukpata, Ikot Abassi and Ibiaku, to come and help them. These towns held a meeting at Ikot Iko Ibun, and arranged to lie in wait for the District Commissioner when he should come up, and try to kill him. They also arranged to kill any Court Messenger who might be sent again."

Koko Akpan also testified to the same effect, as did Udaw Uko, William, and many others.

After such a challenge, it was naturally impossible to send further messengers. On the first day left free by pressure of other work, therefore, *i.e.* Sunday, September 14, we set out for Ikot Iko Ibun.

Till the moment of starting, not a hint was given of our destination, and we marched so rapidly that it was impossible for the inhabitants to arrange for the intended celebration of our arrival. As is so often the case with natives when the unexpected happens, panic seized them, and all, save the women and Christian members of the community, "fled to bush," leaving behind them the message, delivered by a half sympathiser, that they had gone to a "very far country." This was, for the moment, a rather disconcerting move on their part. All over the District there were "palavers" demanding attention, and it was therefore next to impossible to spare time quietly to await the return of the runaways.

We were in the market-place, round which the usual circle of trees gave grateful shade from the blazing sun outside. In the midst stood a splendid specimen, its ancient trunk clasped by creepers which had grown, century by century, beneath its shadow, crossing and recrossing, till



IBIBIO CULT OBJECTS.



IBIBIO FETISHES.



TWO OLD FETISHES AND THE DRUM OF THE EKKPO 'NJAWHAW SOCIETY.

they looked like the gnarled arms of our own ivy, entwining some giant oak. On one side lay a log obviously felled to form a seat for the market-folk, and on this we sat down to think matters over and make some plan for outwitting the fugitives.

Schoolboys and church members crept up each minute, to augment the group already gathered, eager to learn what was to be done for their protection. In this moment of indecision, Court Messenger William, who accompanied me as guide, chanced to remark that this was the very square where he and his companion Udaw Atiata had been beaten, and that yonder, in the club shed, stood the drum played to call the townsfolk together on that occasion. Here was the very thing needed ; so I asked the interpreter, Edward Agbo, who had served in the same capacity in my former District of Oban and was well versed in the drum-language, to play the old Ekoi " recall to the town," the secret of which those friendly folk had consented to entrust to me.

The result was startling. Hardly had the first summons rung out, in sharp clear strokes, than these self-styled " refugees to a far countree " came rushing in from every direction, tumbling over one another in their anxiety to learn what such a call might portend.

When their astonished eyes fell upon the very white man whom they had gone away to avoid, their bewildered expression was indescribably comic. The object of the little expedition was gained. The club was bidden to attend Court on the next day but one, and in a few words it was explained to them that they would consult their own best interests by obeying. A little girl, who had been badly injured, and some wounded schoolboys were also told to appear. Then, without finger raised by our opponents, so great was their stupefaction at having their own drum used against them, we moved on.

Before the Ekkpo shed of the next town, a weird figure was to be seen. About one-third natural size, it was carved from a solid block of wood and painted black, its face covered by a mask formed of an old leathern tankard, such an one from which Shakespeare himself might have drunk in merry meetings at the Mermaid Tavern or rustic gather-

ings in his own Warwickshire. In order to adapt it to its new purpose, one long ear-like flap had been added, and two triangular eye-holes cut out, the handle serving instead of nose.

This fetish, we learned, had been borne by the Christians from the Ekkpo shed, and set out in order to attract my attention. It was very old, and they claimed that its presence was a source of continual danger. When carried in procession, the face of the Image was always covered by the mask above described, from which hung the one elephant-like leather ear. Mindful of information already received, namely, that unless both ears were present the goddess was said to be incapable of hearing prayers for mercy, I felt inclined to believe their plea that no pity was to be hoped for by those unfortunate enough to cross the path of the terrible fetish; so acceded to their entreaty that the "idol" should be removed.

The first case of the series which came up for trial was that in which Chief Ikpe 'Nwa Etuk of Ikot Iko Ibun and eleven men from his town were charged with seriously assaulting a girl and boy during an Ekkpo 'Njawhaw play.

In the course of her evidence, Adiaha Usin, a little girl of seven or eight years old, stated on oath in substance as follows :

" One Sunday the church bells rang in our town. I went out to go to church. On the way I passed through the square where they were playing Ekkpo 'Njawhaw. No one touched me. In the afternoon I went to church again. In passing through the same square Chief Ikpe shouted to the members of his society: ' It seems to me, this little girl went by before in the morning time.' He ordered them to come out and cut me. They rushed out. He himself struck at me with a stick. Many others followed him, and one of these hit me on my arm. I do not know the name of the man who did this. I cried and called for help, but they dragged me into the shed. My husband, Peter Akpan, was with me at first. I threw my arms round his waist, but he freed himself from me and ran to church, to tell the Christians what had happened, and beg them to come and help me. One of the men who had dragged me to the



ADIAHA USIN WITH HER HUSBAND.



COURT MESSENGER WILLIAM.

(In the square at Ikot Iko Ibon, where he was nearly killed.)

Ekkpo shed called out to another: 'Put the Ekkpo 'Njawhaw dress round the little girl's neck.' They therefore tried to pass the two fringes of black grass over my head. While they were doing this a church member, James by name, ran up, caught hold of me and tried to prevent them from putting the dress upon me."

On this point, Mr. Mathews, the Native Court clerk, later explained: "I think that they tried to force the dress upon the little girl, because they intended to offer her in sacrifice. This was always the custom of the society before Government put an end to such things."

To continue Adiaha's statement:

"One of the members of Ekkpo 'Njawhaw kicked me in the side. Then they tried to push the staff of the society into my hand; but I threw it down. Afterwards I ran behind the Christians and got away to Obot's house. The church members followed and took me with them. The bone was not quite broken in my arm, but it was so badly hurt that I think it will never stop paining me."

Peter Akpan, a boy of about fourteen, husband of the above, stated on oath: "Myself and my little wife were going to church. On the road we met Chief Ikpe. The Ekkpo 'Njawhaw drums were being beaten in the public square. Many members were present, playing the play of the Juju. First accused laid his walking-stick upon the ground and said: 'It is plain that you are a great chief in this town!' I looked up! He continued: 'You are walking with your wife, though you know that Ekkpo 'Njawhaw is being played outside!' As he said this, many other members of the society came up. When the little girl saw them she was very terrified and threw her arms round my waist. They came and pulled her off, on which I ran to the church and reported to the members: 'I was walking hither with my little wife. Ekkpo 'Njawhaw has taken her away, and I do not know what they are going to do to her.' On hearing this the Christians followed me and we went to seek her, but could not find her at first, because Ekkpo 'Njawhaw had taken her away. Afterwards she ran to my mother's house. We followed and took her back to church. On the road we met Ekkpo 'Njawhaw again. The members of

this society caught the little girl a second time. James and David, both church members, tried to hold on to her, but the Ekkpo 'Njawhaw people dragged her away to the clubhouse. One of them shouted: 'Put the dress upon her!' At this we tried to get her away. They hit David on his face and the back of his head."

(Here the wound was shown in Court.)

"Accused number six went to bring the dress, and tried to cover my little wife's body with it, putting it over her head. I ran in and tore it off. They ordered me to turn my face away. At that moment they began to beat the drum and cried: 'Ekkpo 'Njawhaw is now going to eat.' That, we knew, meant that they intended to kill both myself and my little wife. Thomas, however, ran up with many Christians. These surrounded the girl and took her away to church. I also escaped with them. It was Akpan Ukpon who told his brother (accused number six) to get the dress and put it over the neck of the little girl. All the accused were present. If it had not been that so many church members ran to our help, they would never have let us go. Our head master told us not to make any row with them because it was Sunday."

David, after having taken oath, gave confirmatory evidence, adding: "They beat the Ekkpo drum, crying out: 'Let the whole gang of Christians be killed.'"

Thomas also added upon oath: "They beat the drum, crying, 'Ekkpo 'Njawhaw is going to eat something to-day,' because a girl dared to come outside while his play was being given. Our schoolmaster told us not to make any row with them because it was Sunday. He came out of the church, but stood far off, and did not go with us to help the little girl, only saying: 'Make no row. To-day is Sunday. Come back to the church.' His name is Jacob."

The first accused, Chief Ikpe 'Nwa Etuk, stated:

"While Ekkpo 'Njawhaw was being played in our town, myself and many others were in the Ekkpo-house. I heard some one call out that a girl was passing by. I said 'How is this? Never have I seen a thing of this kind! When Ekkpo plays, neither woman nor girl may come outside the house!' I asked some of the members to go and

see if the report was true. They came back and said : ' It is a girl.' On that occasion she got away. The second time that she and her husband came outside I saw her and asked the husband : ' Do you think that you are the owner of this town, or our chief, that you take a girl outside ? On the first occasion we took no notice of it. Now you have brought her again while we are playing. What do you expect us to do in this town ? ' I also said to her brother David : ' It seems to me that you are not very fond of your sister. If you were, you would not have brought her out again while Ekkpo is playing ! ' . . . They put the dress upon the little girl because she came out during a performance. In putting it upon her, they said : ' This is the thing you wished to see.' "

(*Questioned by Court.*) " Do you always beat the drum when you are going to sacrifice victims to Ekkpo 'Njaw-haw ? " "

(*Answer.*) " We lay the offerings upon a palm leaf, beat the drum, and then drink palm-wine." "

The sixth accused, questioned by Court as to what happened when the girl was seized, answered :

" While we were playing, she came outside. After that, a member of the society ordered me to put the dress upon her, and I did so. The Christians seized her on one side, we seized her by the other ; but they carried her off with them to church." "

(*Q.*) " Who ordered the dress to be put upon her ? " "

(*A.*) " All the members of Ekkpo." "

(*Q.*) " Why did they wish to put the dress upon her ? " "

(*A.*) " Because she came outside during a play. So they ordered her to put on the dress and dance, as was customary in such a case." "

(*Q.*) " If any woman came outside during a play, was she ordered to dance ? " "

(*A.*) " Yes. When any woman came out at such a time, she was made to dance"—(after pause)—" but no woman has ever come out before." "

(*Q.*) " Did any one try to stop them from putting the dress upon her ? " "

(*A.*) " No one." "

(Q.) "Whether a woman was married or not, could the dress be put upon her?"

(A.) "Yes. Whether married or not, the usual thing was to put the dress upon her and make her dance."

At Ukataran, I was fortunate enough to happen upon the funeral rites of one of the most powerful chiefs of the place, who had also held high rank in the Ekkpo 'Njawhaw society. While cycling along one of the main paths, strange cries were heard from a compound some way off, and, as these seemed to have considerable effect upon the men with me, I asked what they might mean. They answered that it was Ekkpo 'Njawhaw "playing" for the death of a powerful son.

On learning this, I followed the sound and came, by a narrow path, to a small open space before the club-house. Within, against the background of a circular screen formed of plaited palm leaves, which reached from floor to roof, seated upright upon a chair of state, was the body of the chief, robed in its finest garments, in this case of velvet embroidered with gold. The two hands were supported upon the arms of the chair, a chief's sceptre placed in the right and the staff of the Ekkpo 'Njawhaw society in the left. Over the head hung draperies of rich silk, which fell so as to produce a cowl-like effect, not without dignity, casting a shadow curiously reminiscent of that which falls so mysteriously over the features of Michael Angelo's great statue of Lorenzo il Magnifico. The face of the dead was covered by one of the most wonderful masks I have ever seen, almost Greek in outline and the colour of new-wrought gold.

On either side of the central figure, motionless as if moulded from bronze, sat two splendid negroes, their smooth dark skin unhidden by even the smallest of loin cloths. These were members of the dead man's household, and, in days not distant, would have been buried alive in the grave of their lord. Mindful of the fact that such things are not yet quite stamped out, I paused near them, that, should they wish to do so, they might have a chance of claiming protection. Neither, however, appeared conscious of my presence. They sat as if dazed with grief, or, maybe,



THE FUNERAL OF A GREAT EKKPO NJAWHAW CHIEF.



drugs ; so I could take no action with regard to them and, after waiting a while, was forced to move away.

Within the threshold, stretching almost to the feet of the corpse, were baskets, containing hundreds of manillas, with bracelets and anklets of finely wrought ancient bronze—true Ákpan Ajawhaw these, full to the brim with everything which might serve the dead chief in the realm to which he had gone.

Beyond these offerings again, lay the bodies of slaughtered cows, goats, and sheep, extended in a rude half-circle before the house and fenced in by two curved lines of posts, over which brightly coloured cloths were stretched.

Later we learned that it is not usual to enter the ranks of Ekkpo 'Njawhaw without first joining a smaller society, Éiku by name, in which initiates are prepared to receive the greater mysteries. This is, however, not absolutely obligatory, and the great difference between it and the more important cult was explained, somewhat naïvely, to consist in the fact that the lesser society has no power to trouble women, while, once a member of Ekkpo 'Njawhaw, "you can break anything ; it is no matter to what lengths you go in the destruction of an enemy's property, whether male or female."

Chance brought to our knowledge the fact that this terrible cult, the rites of which, by native law, it is death for any woman to see, was once a woman's society. Many hundred years ago, however, the men persuaded the younger women to share its secrets with them. No sooner had they learnt these than they proclaimed a law : "From now on, should any woman witness the rites of Ekkpo 'Njawhaw, her head shall be struck off in the sight of all the people." Those who would not submit were beheaded in consequence, and the secrets of the cult have ever since been confined to men.¹

Of the rise and fall of lesser societies,² the story of that of Agbo, *i.e.* Death, may be cited as typical. The following

¹ A full account of how this came about is given in *Woman's Mysteries of a Primitive People*, D. Amaury Talbot, p. 201.

² Two societies of smaller importance, to be found among Western and Northern Ibibio, are the Ekang and Obbonn, which do not come into prominence except in plays given at the death of a member.

account was given by a brother of the head chief of Idua Eket :

“ There was once a great man who lived in the Okkonn region, near Ubium River, who wished to found a new society, so that his name might always be held in remembrance. One day, therefore, he called the people together and said :

“ ‘ If any man wishes to join my company, he must give up stealing. Now that this Juju has been established, all thieves must confess their crimes and leave the town. On no account can such become members of our club, or dwell where it is.’

“ The people asked : ‘ Should a thief try to join, what can we do ? ’ To which the chief answered : ‘ We must catch him, cut off his head, and lay it before the fetish, the name of which is Agbo.’

“ When the townsfolk heard this, they cried out : ‘ We agree. It is a good rule.’

“ The head chief continued : ‘ I know that there are many thieves in this town. So I proclaim that, for the future, all who are caught stealing must be slain before the shrine. Let all men know that we have made a strong law that none may steal any more ! ’ To this the townsfolk answered : ‘ We agree.’

“ When the time came to play the play of the society, all the members brought drums and beat them. Some sat upon the floor of the Juju shed, and some stood outside dancing. Each man had a bowl, all exactly of the same size, from which to drink. The bowls were filled, one for each, and when a man started to drink he had to empty the vessel at a draught. Should he leave any, he was ordered to pay a fine. They played till evening time, but when night fell went home.

“ About a year after founding the new society, a young girl stole some yams from a farm. The priest of Agbo heard of this, and, calling one of the members, dressed him like a Juju Image, then sent him to call the townsfolk together. From all the countryside they came and gathered before the club-house. The chief proclaimed : ‘ According to our law, a woman falls to-day.’ Then he sent for the

girl's parents, ordering them to bring their daughter. On their arrival, he announced : ' I have heard of this matter. Now we made a law that none in this town might steal, on pain of death.'

" The father answered : ' I heard when the law was proclaimed.' The priest continued : ' Do you know what we said should be done if any one broke the law ? ' The father answered : ' I heard.' Then the chief said further : ' Since you know the penalty, your daughter must die.' To this the father replied : ' I agree.'

" Immediately some of the principal members seized the girl and locked her up in the Juju-house, where she stayed all that night, bound before the fetish. Next morning a member of the society, dressed in Juju robes, went round to summon all the countryside, crying : ' To-day our society is going to do something ! '

" When all were assembled, the men in charge of the girl entered the club-house, and there slew her before the Image of Agbo. Afterwards the body was borne out and laid before the threshold. Then the head chief stood forth, and, pointing to the corpse, said : ' Look upon this which has been done on account of the law which we made. Because this girl was a thief, her father handed her over to our society, and she is slain.' The townsmen answered with a great shout : ' So perish all thieves ! Then our goods will be safe in our houses.'

" The victim's head was cut off and laid before the Juju ; but the body was thrown away in the bush set apart for those of evil-doers.

" Not long afterwards, eight people were found to have joined together to form a ' thieving club.' Then the Agbo members took guns and matchets, fell upon the thieves one by one, cut off their heads, and brought these also before the Juju.

" Neighbouring towns found the rule good, so started lodges for themselves. In Idua Eket the society grew to be very strong, but one day an Okkonn man came thither and said :

" ' This is not a good law. In time it will kill all the people in our town.' To this the head chief replied : ' If

you do not like our society, it can only be because you yourself are a thief or a wicked person. So we will kill you.' The members answered: 'Yes. It is proved. A good man would have nothing to fear.' The man replied: 'Wait a bit! I mean that an innocent person may be accused by one who hates him, and so be killed for nothing.'

"Upon this the others said: 'There is something in what you say. What would you advise us to do, therefore, if we decided to put an end to the society?' The Okkonn man answered: 'If you think it better to break up the club, bring one goat, one dog, and sixteen manillas, and I will show you the way to do this, so that the Juju may not kill any more men.'

"The Idua people brought all that was asked, together with much palm-wine. The stranger slew the offerings, pouring out the blood before the Juju; then bade them get together the skulls of the slain, pack them in a box, and nail it up firmly. This he cast into the river, that its waters might bear away all danger from the town.

"The Iduans said: 'It is well. Had we gone on according to the rule of the Juju, all the people of our town must have perished one by one.'"

CHAPTER XV

WOMAN, MARRIAGE, ETC.

AN account of Ibibio women, gathered from purely feminine sources, has already been published.¹ Here, therefore, it is only necessary to give supplementary information collected from men.

With this people, marriage consists in payment by the groom to the bride's family of a dowry usually varying in amount from £5 to £20, sometimes reaching up to £100. In this the whole family share, the father receiving the greater proportion and the mother the next largest sum. Among the richer Efik of Calabar, bride-price and wedding gifts are said to reach double this amount.

The child is generally betrothed when from two to six years old, the ceremony consisting of drinks given to the parents in the presence of witnesses. From then onwards, besides occasional small gifts to the betrothed and her family, the bridegroom-to-be has to help on the farm, in fetching firewood and in taking his share of any such work as house-building, etc.

The dowry is paid in instalments, of which the first is usually handed over when the girl is ten or eleven years old, and the last at the time of the actual marriage, though occasionally not till long afterwards. In some regions not only is the child allowed to visit her betrothed before this, but is even brought up in the latter's household, so that her conduct may be carefully supervised.

The bride-to-be goes into the fattening-house soon after her first menstruation, and there stays from three months to three years, according to the riches of her parents or

¹ D. Amaury Talbot, *Woman's Mysteries of a Primitive People*.

betrothed—who often supplies the food during this period—and the custom of the particular tribe to which she belongs. If the girl is “circumcised,”¹ as is usual among the greater number of Ibibio, the operation is generally carried out while she is in the fattening-room, though sometimes it is performed when she is about five or six years old.

The marriage takes place immediately the time of seclusion is over, and after a separate gift, called “the he-goat’s entry,” has been made by the fiancé. The maid is generally presented by her parents with cooking utensils and sometimes with a servant to wait upon her, while the bridegroom supplies the wedding feast.

As a rule, marriage is not permitted between those who are, so far as is known, related in the smallest degree, nor is a man allowed to marry the sister of a wife during the lifetime of the latter. A free woman could marry a slave, in which case their children were nearly always free.

Owing to the changes consequent upon the introduction of white rule, matrimonial “palavers” form a fruitful cause of litigation. Before the coming of Government, a wife was her husband’s legal property and little better than a slave. The hold she had upon him was twofold; one on account of the children she bore him, since, in the condition of constant fighting, the strength of the family was an all-important factor; while the other was the dread that, if too ill-treated, she might call in the aid of witchcraft or poison to rid herself of so harsh a master.

Whenever possible, the actual birth takes place inside, or at the back of, the house, and in the presence of old women of experience who give what help is necessary. The navel cord is buried under a plantain or a tombo palm, which is henceforth called after, and said to belong to, the child; while the after-birth is usually buried either with it or separately outside the compound. The mother stays in the house for a period ranging from one to four weeks, during which time she is not allowed to go out save to wash.

The blessing of many children is still looked upon as the greatest and best gift of the gods. This was somewhat amusingly exemplified one day just before the end of our

¹ Clitoridectomy.

tour, when passing through a system of creeks. The Ibaka chiefs had given me as guide a man called Eyen Akan Inyene. At evening time, when writing down the name of each labourer beside the amount of his day's wage, a gust of laughter shook the paddlers as that of our guide was given. On inquiry, it was found that their mirth was caused by the meaning of his name, "Children are better than riches"—a favourite Ibibio proverb.

It is singular, amid a people where large families were of such value, that so many children should have been put to death on account of various tabu. In the old days infants born feet foremost were allowed to die and their bodies thrown away, while the mothers were, in some parts, driven out into the bush, and never allowed to return. Babies who came into the world with teeth, or those whose upper teeth showed first, were apparently unknown; if any such appeared they would probably have met with similar treatment to those born feet first.

The birth of twins was regarded as so great a misfortune that, in olden times, it was followed in many tribes by the death of both mother and babes; in others the former was allowed to live in the bush and even in some parts to take her property with her into exile, after making a sacrifice to Isong, the Earth, of a duck, goat and tortoise. The babe was, however, invariably placed in a large earthenware pot which was thrown into the thick bush.

In recent times the custom was modified in Eket District in so far that after the death of both children the wretched woman was permitted to exist in a special settlement, set apart for these unfortunate outcasts. The following account of how this cruel custom was stopped throughout the Oron country has been given by Chief Daniel Henshaw:

"One day, in the month of March 1902, I was travelling from Eyo Abassi to Oyokun Inyang. About mid-way, on the right-hand side of the road, a path branched off. As we went by, I heard a noise in the bush, and so said to my guide, Abassi Inyang, that I wished to go and find out the cause of the cries. He, however, said that he could not come, as it was against their country's law since the path led to a "twin-town." I made up my mind to go alone,

and after about fifteen minutes' walk reached a settlement of small huts, built under the big trees. It is thick bush here, and no one had taken the trouble to clear the place or build proper houses. There I saw more than a hundred women, standing in a small open space, all crying and shouting together.

"When the people saw me, they stopped at once and looked at me as if they had never seen a man before. I went up and tried to find out what the trouble was. On that, they pointed to a woman sitting near one of the huts and said: 'We want her to leave this place and go to the second twin-town farther on.'

"I asked, 'Why?' To which they answered: 'Because she has *twice* borne twins and cannot therefore be allowed to stay with us, who have only once suffered such a calamity.'

"The poor woman, Aruk Osio by name, cried out: 'They are all driving me from the town, so that I should be forced to live in the bush by myself. Even here, we lead a very hard life. We can get scarcely any food and have a lot of trouble, seeking about in the bush before we can find ever so little. Also we may not draw water from the main streams and are forbidden to attend any market. Sometimes the little bush-springs, which are the only ones permitted for our use, dry up in the hot season and we have to search for a long time before even a drop can be found. There is no way of buying food except when the time for the "twin-market" comes round; then, by going to it along bush paths, we can get a few yams and cassava in exchange for the nuts which we have picked in the forest. If life here is so hard and difficult, how much more so will it be if they drive me off still farther, to live by myself! I would rather die than go!'

"On hearing this, I tried to persuade the other women to let her stay, but one of them, Isaw by name, answered:

" 'We will not permit this; but, if you want to be a good judge and help us, try and arrange that we should all be allowed to leave this bush, where so many have died away from our good homes and with no husband at all! The people of Eyo Abassi sent us here and, according to their law, no food may be brought except to one who comes of a

large family. In such a case, perhaps some one will come and lay down food on the road, shouting your name. Even then, the chop is never enough to last for more than a day or two. We are troubled for want of water to drink and have no cloth but these small pieces."

"Upon this, I looked round and saw that most of them were naked, save for a narrow rag about the waist. So I promised them that, if they would allow the poor woman to stay for a week or two, I would try to persuade their people to let them return home. They would not agree to this, so I told Aruk Osio to do as they bade her, lest, in my absence, they should drive her by force into the bush. On that, she rose up and went off with a little basket upon her arm, crying very bitterly. The words which she used were: 'Andinyong kenim, O ne mi?' Andinyong kenim, O ete mi?' *i.e.* 'Where shall I go, O my Mother? Where shall I go, O my Father?'

"After this, I returned home to Idua Oronn and sent to call all the Court members to attend the sitting next Monday. My heart could not rest at the thought of the poor woman, so I sent for one of the chiefs, Esin Anwana by name, who is a powerful man in the town of Eyo Abassi. I conversed with him and asked him to help me by speaking to his people. He at once agreed, and next Monday, after the other cases were finished, I put the matter before the members, begging that they would allow the poor women to return to their homes.

"On hearing this all made a great noise, crying out: 'Nyung awkaw mbubia oduk idung oduhu ama awaw,' *i.e.* 'Henshaw says that the twin-women may come back to town! Were such a thing done our Jujus would leave us!'

"When they were silent again I spoke very gently with them and said: 'I wish to put one or two questions to you, will you please answer them?' They replied that they were willing; on which I asked: 'Have you ever known any woman conceive by herself, without the aid of some man?' To this they answered, 'No.'

"Again I asked: 'To whom does the child belong?' They answered: 'To the man.'" So I begged them to take

their wives back again ; to which they replied : ' This thing has been going on for many hundred years. The Juju will not allow any twin-woman near the town. Should his rule be broken we must all die.'

" Not the members for Eyo Abassi alone said this, but also those from more than sixty different towns who had come together about the matter. After all had gone, I sent Abassi Inyang to call one of the twin-women before me. The one chosen was called ' The Mother of Twin-women ' because she was the oldest. When she came I said :

" ' I am going to report all that I have seen and heard about your treatment to the District Commissioner, Mr. Whitehouse,' who in those days governed Oron from Calabar. ' Should he agree to my recommendation that you should be sent back to your homes, would you be willing to go ? '

" The old woman replied : ' I must consult the others before giving an answer.' So she went away promising to bring them down on the morrow.

" The following day I heard a song upon the road, in the distance, but drawing nearer and nearer to my house. So I sent a messenger to see what sort of people were coming to visit me. He returned and said : ' It is the Twin-mother with her following.' At once I went out to meet them. A little way before my compound they saw me and many ran to embrace me. Some of them wept, some smiled. I took them in. They formed a circle in my compound and began to dance. All were in rags and looking very poor, so different from old times, when they had danced in gay clothing. One of the songs which they sang ran thus : ' Nyung effanga amada mbubia oduk idung,' *i.e.* ' Henshaw has brought the twin-mothers back to the town.' When they stopped, I asked them to take a seat. They all sat down.

" First I thanked them for coming to visit me, then put to them the same question which I had asked the oldest woman. All agreed at once, begging but one thing : ' Would Government protect them ? Otherwise the townsfolk would surely kill them.' This I promised, saying : ' Government is ready to help all. The principal reason

for which white men came is to save life and protect the helpless.'

"On hearing this they were all very glad and said they were ready to return at once. I gave them a little dash and they started singing again and went on their way, more than pleased.

"On the morrow I proceeded to Calabar to report the whole matter to the District Commissioner. He approved and instructed me to see the chiefs and do all that I could to arrange matters. Three days later I called another full meeting of the Native Court, and fixed a day on which each man was to have a house ready to receive his wife, so that the women might come home within the week. Chief Esin Anwana seconded my words, but the others looked displeased and said: 'We must first go and consult our Juju with sacrifice.' Thereupon all went gloomily home. I sent to the Twin-mother and said: 'Tell all the women to pack up their things. Within a week I shall come myself to fetch you and will send Court Messengers round every town so that you may go home in safety.'

"On March 28, I went early in the morning to Eyo Abassi and saw all the chiefs in the town square; after which I went to the late Chief Osio Isaw's compound and bade him send round a bell, proclaiming that if any person or persons troubled the twin-women on coming home, Government would take up the case and severely punish the offender.

"After this had been done, I went straight to the bush where the twin-women dwelt. All had packed and were ready; so I told them to accompany me back to the town. Arrived there, I stood in the middle, watching while each went to her own home.

"That was a great day throughout Oronn! For some time afterwards Court Messengers were continually walking round the country to see that no harm was done. Two days after I had reached home, these twin-women brought a fine play with much joy to visit me. I myself was more than pleased, and at once joined and danced with them for a few minutes. As I never practised their dance I could not do more. After this, I stood by and watched

them. At the conclusion I gave them another small dash and they went happily away.

"Since that day they have been allowed to draw water from the town springs, to attend any market and to walk fearlessly along the main road, etc. Everything has gone nicely up to date, and, because of my part in the affair, Oronn people sometimes call me 'Ebe Mbubia,' *i.e.* the twin-women's husband. That is all of the matter so far as I can remember."

Surely it is more than enough reward for a white administrator that a man such as this, head chief of his clan, should explain to these poor women that "the principal reason for which white men came is to save life and protect the helpless."

As will be gathered from the number of "twin-mothers" mentioned as belonging to Eyo Abassi alone, twin births are remarkably frequent among this people. Possibly this is partly due to the dread of such a thing, which is always present in the minds of those about to become mothers.

A child is usually suckled for two or three years, during which time the husband is not supposed to approach his wife, though he is sometimes allowed to do so after a year has gone by. A curious power possessed by many women of these parts is that of producing milk apparently at will. It is quite common for those who have not borne babes for ten or fifteen years to be able to do this. Grandmothers of sixty to seventy still suckle their grandchildren. Awai of Idua Oronn, for instance, who is about seventy years old, is a well-known example of this.¹

A famous Ibo woman, known to most west-coasters under the name of Helen of Troy, because two towns fought to claim her on account of her beauty, has borne no child for fourteen years, yet is still said to produce milk to nourish unfortunate waifs, such as twins or motherless children. My friend, Dr. T. B. Adam, one of the kindest and most brilliant officers of the West African Medical Service, analysed the milk and pronounced it to be of excellent

¹ In the course of the study of Ibo and neighbouring tribes, it transpired that, among Kalabari, at least, the ability to produce milk, almost at will, is regarded as an ordinary attribute of womanhood.

quality. The woman is now employed as matron of one of the Government prisons, and many unhappy orphans have had cause to bless her lactiferous powers.

According to several informants, some barren women are also asserted to have the power of suckling babes. This is thought to be sent them in consolation for having no children of their own. The only means adopted in order to produce such a state of affairs is said to be the giving of hot tombo (palm-wine), which is thought to have the property of increasing the flow.

Native doctors claim to be in possession of much obstetric knowledge. Over and over again cases of abortion have occurred after the taking of draughts prescribed by a medicine man; but there is no proof that this was not merely a matter of coincidence. When it is suspected that a babe is about to be born feet foremost—which among Ibo as well as Ibibio is regarded as a grave misfortune—some of the most famous native doctors are called in to manipulate the body of the mother so that the infant assumes the desired position. It is very rare that any are born in this heterodox fashion, owing, it is said, to the careful precautions taken to prevent such a disaster.

The desire of Ibibio women for offspring is stronger than all else. Young girls just out of the fatting-house hope to become mothers within a year after marriage and, by native law, can claim divorce from a husband who proves incapable of fulfilling their wish within that time.

One way in which jealous women are said to be able to prevent fellow-wives from bearing babes is by bribing a witch to retard delivery by turning the key in a lock *nine times*. A case of this kind once came before me in Court, and, at the earnest request of the plaintiff, I ordered the wizard to revoke the spell by turning the key the required number of times in the direction of unlocking. This brought vividly to mind “the nine witch knots” of the old northern ballad. It also recalls the jealous ruse to which Hera herself descended in order to retard the birth of Hercules.

The babe is named by the father either on the day of its birth or the next day. The first son is generally called Akpan and the eldest daughter Adiaha. A male child is

usually circumcised within the first two months, by a man in some regions, and a woman in others.¹

Once in Oyubia Court a case was heard in which there came to light a custom still obtaining among the Okkobbor, which would seem to be a relic of endogamy, applied to women, and originally intended in punishment of those who married out of the clan.

From the evidence it appeared that a woman who had espoused a man of another town grew weary of her husband, and fled from him back to her birthplace. Under such circumstances, a repulsive custom surrendered her to the will of the members of all the principal "companies" of the town. On the night of her arrival, the chief "society," twenty to thirty strong, assembled at her father's house, bringing gifts of palm-wine, rum, or gin, and claiming full rights over the woman from sunset to dawn. The following night the next "society" in importance had the power to make a similar claim, which might be repeated by another on the third night. After each of the principal clubs had exacted fulfilment of the custom, should the woman still survive, a small dowry was offered for her by some fellow-townsmen, and she was given over to him as a wife.

In this case, the father, Chief 'Ndu of Odobo, proved to be an arresting figure. He wore a beard, arranged according to the ancient fashion of the tribe, in three plaits, much in the style of the Mangbatu people, as represented in the Duke of Mecklenburg's book,² and also, save for the absence of narrow whiskers, strikingly like one of the captives shown on the lower part of a proto-dynastic Egyptian palette in the British Museum. In his discussion of the ethnic relationship of the vanquished there depicted,³ Doctor Seligmann claims all the plaited-beard people, whether north or south, as being kin to the prehistoric Egyptians, mixed with negroes in the south, and perhaps with other races in the north.⁴

¹ For clitoridectomy of females, see p. 204.

² *From the Congo to the Niger and the Nile*, vol. ii. p. 37.

³ Dr. C. G. Seligmann, *Ethnic Relationship of the Vanquished represented on certain Protodynastic Egyptian Palettes* (vii. 44-9).

⁴ Prof. Flinders Petrie, F.R.S., *Ancient Egypt*, Part IV. p. 171.

'Ndu seems to have objected to the enforcement of this revolting custom upon his daughter, pointing out that, though exacted in olden days, it ought no longer to be observed, lest Government should disapprove. He seems to have persuaded the members of the chief "society" to go from his compound, leaving the woman unharmed, but, incredible as it may appear, the latter not only followed in order to submit to the rule, but even broke from her father and returned to the house where the company was assembled, after 'Ndu had discovered what was going on, and had forced his way in and compelled her to follow him home.

The old man's conduct resulted in steps being taken which, it is trusted, will have put an end to the custom throughout the Okkobbor country.

Perhaps the worst case, as showing the state of morality in certain sections of the District, is one recorded under No. 440 in the Judgment Book of 'Ndiya, which was heard on June 5, 1913. In this the prosecutor stated on oath :

"The accused was my late father's wife. While my father was alive, her father had connection with her. After the death of my father she said she would marry me, and I took her in marriage. When I was living with her, her brother named Ekpe 'Mkpa came and asked permission from me to take the woman to stay with him. After he had taken her to his house he had connection with her, and on learning this I refused her. Afterwards I was persuaded to allow her to come back, but took action against the brother."

A curious Juju for securing the favour of wished-for parents-in-law was brought to my notice at Idua Native Court on August 8, 1913.

In this case Okong Odiong accused Edet Okong of having made a magic medicine to turn away from him the favour of a couple whose daughter both men were anxious to marry. Okong Odiong, in his sworn statement, said :

"Accused made a Juju to poison the hearts of my future father- and mother-in-law against me, that they might take back their promise to give me their daughter

and bestow her upon him instead. I did not myself see the poison made. Etim Odiong told me that he went to Edet Okong's house and saw it there on the table. It was the kind which native people mix with black rum and carry outside their houses at dawn. Then they fill their mouths with the mixture, blowing it outward, that it may be caught upon the breeze and carried to those whom it is intended to affect. The wind bears it straight to such persons, and it touches their hearts, causing them to look with hatred upon some whom they formerly loved, and regard others with kindness whom they did not like before, according to the names called before the Juju when the medicine was made."

All the chiefs present in court on this occasion testified that this was a well-known " magic " in their town.

CHAPTER XVI

SOCIAL ORGANISATION AND TABU

IBIBIO, like most Nigerian peoples, are divided into age-classes or Nka, the number of which varies from three to ten. When there are only three or four of these in a town, entrance is not permitted till the age of puberty, and after the teeth have been filed and the town or tribal "marks" made upon the youth. In places where there are many Nka, children are generally admitted into the first when about three to five years old. As a rule there is no special ceremony, except a feast given by the parents, and in some cases a present to the old men of the town.

The "marks" consist of one or more small circles of concentric rings cut at the side of the face from the temple downwards. Usually a mixture of ground-charcoal and palm-oil is rubbed into the cuts to make them more conspicuous. The number of circles depends upon the tribe, town and age-class, and varies from one large to four small ones. In some cases additional circles are cut between the eyebrows. The two front incisors are generally filed into points, so as to form an inverted V.

Male and female Nka never mix, and each tries all minor cases and settles any disputes between its members.

A town is composed of a number of quarters or Idong, sometimes several miles distant from one another, each of which is divided in its turn into scattered compounds (Ekpuk). Each large town was independent and ruled by its chief (Obbong),¹ helped by sub-chiefs (Ndiana Obbong), of whom each quarter had at least one, or, in some places, by the head Juju priest. Generally a chief or sub-chief

¹ Otherwise called Obong Isong or Idong, Abong or Abonn.

was succeeded by a member of the same family, usually his eldest son, if of an age and possessed of common sense ; in some towns, however, the oldest or most important of the sub-chiefs obtained the chieftainship. Great respect was shown to age, and no decision of any moment, whether in judicial or political matters, was given save in the presence, and with the concurrence, of the old men of the town.

This old system is still retained in essentials, and the people may be said to have almost complete self-government, except that a certain amount of European supervision is exercised, and human sacrifices, and other customs repugnant to British ideas, are no longer permitted. The influence, also, of the great secret societies, such as Ekkpe and Idiong, has been considerably curtailed.

In cases of murder, the guilty man was, according to local custom, either ordered to hang himself, beheaded by the Ekkpo 'Njawhaw society—like the Ogboni and Oro among the Yoruba—beaten to death with clubs, or killed in the same way as his victim. Among the Eket, Anang and most Northern Ibibio, a sum of money was often accepted if the chief or parents of the murdered man were willing to receive it.

Any one guilty of manslaughter was ordered to pay the expenses of the funeral, and in some places to give the chief a present of four hundred manillas and a goat in addition. Among the Uruan he also had to serve the family of the deceased as a slave.

Cases of wounding or serious assaults were usually punished by the infliction of a fine of one goat and a hundred manillas, divided between the chiefs and townspeople, and the necessity to tend the wounded man and defray the cost of all medicines till his complete recovery.

In most places a thief was rubbed over with charcoal and ashes and taken round the town—among the Abiakpaw, naked and ringing a bell—followed by a jeering crowd singing abusive songs. In North-eastern Ibibio land he was only fined a goat, which was handed over to the chiefs, and forced to refund the stolen property or its value. An inveterate thief was almost everywhere sold into slavery.

Cases of adultery were tried in some places by the husband,

in others by the chiefs, and generally punished by the infliction of a fine of one goat and a fowl or tortoise, which was sacrificed in purification before the ancestral shrine. Sometimes the sum of £1 to £5 was demanded in addition, while among the Anang, as with many Ibo, if the judgment was not carried out, the husband or some member of his family would try to have intercourse with one of the corespondent's relatives. The Abiakpaw treated the fine as a debt, and sold the debtor if unable to pay. In the case of adultery with a betrothed girl, the fiancé generally imposed a small fine, and had the right to refuse to carry out the marriage and to have refunded any part of the dowry which he had already paid.

Rape seems to have been rare, and curiously enough among Southern Ibibio was hardly more "expensive" than adultery. In the north, however, the guilty man was sold into slavery.

Debt was very common, and often treated as a lever to turn the debtor or one of his family into a kind of slave. A usual way of settling his liabilities was for a man to marry off a sister or daughter or pawn himself, or one of his family, to a chief or rich man. Among the Efik and Eket a man often had recourse to the Ekkpe or Idiong club, the members of which would, in return for a fee, seize a debtor's property, and if necessary, even his land, to the amount of the debt, and hand them over to the creditor. At Ikot Ekpene a debtor was usually sold into slavery.

Mutilation was not practised save if a slave among the Efik, or a son among the Eket and Anang, committed adultery with his master's or father's wife, in which case his ears were usually cut off. Among these tribes, also, a person who stole more than once or twice generally had his toes chopped off.

In almost every case any one accused of an offence had the right to invoke a Juju or appeal to trial by ordeal. In the first case a certain time was fixed in which the particular Juju invoked—usually an 'Mbiam—was requested to kill him if he were guilty; if within this period no sickness or accident befell him, he was judged innocent. The common ordeal for minor cases such as theft or adultery was that of

burning oil, into which the accused man thrust his hands ; if, on withdrawal, these were found to be unscathed, he was cleared of the charge. In serious cases—and almost invariably in those of witchcraft—the accused person was forced to swallow ground Esere bean, which, if innocent, he vomited up, but otherwise proved fatal to him.

Like almost all the Semi-Bantu in Southern Nigeria, the Ibibio are obsessed with the fear of witchcraft, and at times an epidemic of Esere eating will depopulate a whole town.¹ As a rule, however, they are not so absolutely terror-stricken as the Mbembe of the Upper Cross River, where, in certain towns, it has been known for every adult to be forced to undergo the ordeal—in some cases twice in a decade. The potion is there administered both by mouth and per anum, since some witches are credited with the power of receiving the sasswood into a kind of pouch near the stomach, and in this way to suffer no ill effects.

In less serious cases the Afia Ikpa “medicine” was employed to find out if a man were innocent or not. This was put on a whip, with which the accused was flogged if guilty. Otherwise it is said that the whip could not be moved. Another method was for a “doctor” to put certain medicine on the eyes of the man charged with the offence, who, if guilty, would then be unable to open them.

As a general rule slaves were well treated, not only from a feeling of humanity, but also because they were valuable property. Among the Southern Ibibio they were generally allowed to marry free women, lived in their masters' compounds and often obtained much influence and even sometimes the headship of the house. The children of a free man and slave wife and, among many peoples, as already mentioned, those of a free woman and slave husband, were always free. Among the North-western Ibibio the issue, if born in the place, of slave parents were also considered free.

Property descended to the eldest son, or, if he were too young, to the eldest brother ; in either case in trust for the family. The younger sons always had a share and at least the right, if there were enough money, to the wherewithal to buy a wife.

¹ *In the Shadow of the Bush*, p. 163 et seq.

Land was communal, belonging to the town or quarter, but in the first place to the person who cleared the bush. Each family divided out its own share yearly, but any one in the quarter could take unclaimed land. Owing to the wasteful method of farming there is in parts insufficient for the population with its density of about 200 to the square mile. Consequently land disputes are becoming very common—due, in many cases, to the results of conquest by a stronger people before the arrival of Government.

The chief occupation is farming, followed at a long interval by trading and fishing. The greater part of the farm work, as usual in West Africa, falls upon the women. The men cut down and burn the bush, clear the ground, make the yam heaps, and tie up the growing vines to the sticks. The rest of the farm work is carried out by women, sometimes with the aid of male slaves, while among the Oronn the men often help in the weeding. Unfortunately, throughout Nigeria, the spread of education and the desire of the younger generation to raise themselves in the social scale have resulted in a prejudice against manual labour.

The chief crops are, in their order of importance, yams and coco-yams, cassava, maize, plantains, okro, ground-nuts, and leaves used for making soup. The area under cultivation at any one time amounts probably to something over a quarter of the whole. As stated previously, the ground is left fallow from three to seven years, according to the amount available, to ensure a time for recovery, since no manures or fertilisers of any kind are used.

The houses are oblong with palm-leaf roofs and thin walls, consisting of clay plastered over palm mid-ribs or other sticks. Sometimes, especially among the Efik, the various houses are united to form a square compound, which is, however, much larger than among the Ekoi, where the enclosed space forms a kind of impluvium. In the construction of the house the men do everything except the rubbing and smoothing of the walls and floor.

Both sexes are extraordinarily keen traders, almost as much as the Ibo and Yoruba, but most of the petty local trading is confined to women, one of whose chief duties and pleasures is to attend neighbouring markets. The currency

consisted of metal rods, often brass or even copper in the old days, and of thinner "wires," present value sixpence and about one-third of a penny respectively; and, in the west, of manillas, a kind of metal bracelet, worth about a hundred to £1.

The distinction between laws and tabu is not very clear to the ordinary Ibibio, and, in fact, the two coincide to a large extent. For instance, adultery—at any rate with a father's wife—is forbidden by both; for the infraction of the tabu the adulterer has to sacrifice to the ancestors or the Earth in order to purify the house from the pollution, while he is fined, or pays damages, for his transgression against the law.

The tabu in force among Ibibio and neighbouring tribes seem to fall into five classes. First, those ordained for totemistic reasons or in gratitude for legendary service. Secondly, those connected with affinities, which have already been dealt with under that heading. Thirdly, those which, by sympathetic magic, are thought capable of producing ill effects, not only upon all who partake, but also upon their unborn offspring. Fourthly, those forbidden only at certain times or places, and, fifthly, objects sacred to some special Juju.

Of the first class, *i.e.* those imposed in gratitude for service rendered by animals, there are many examples in this part of the world. At Ikon Ito, for instance, no man is allowed to kill or eat any crocodile. The reason given is as follows:

"In the olden days two great families, from one of which the people of Ikon Ito are descended, lived on either side of a creek. A quarrel arose, and the Itoans passed over, at low tide, to attack their enemies. After hard fighting they were driven back to the edge of the creek, and would gladly have crossed; but meantime the tide had risen, and the water was so swift and deep as to make this impossible. All must have perished had not a giant crocodile suddenly appeared, its head upon the one bank and its tail on the other. Over this strange bridge the vanquished hurried, and when all were safe on their own

shore, the crocodile dived down and was never more seen. In gratitude for this legendary service, a law was made against the harming of crocodiles, and the tabu is carefully kept, even to the present day."

The people of Idua Asang, again, may not eat the neck or loin of goat, nor the flesh of any antelope. Should these tabu be broken, the tongues of the offenders are said to swell up and choke them, while hands and feet grow to enormous size. There seems to be some vague legend that the founder of the tribe was suckled by an antelope. A similar story is told about the brother of a man who has been in our employment for several years, a Bornuese from the North Cameroons named Mandara. The following is the account taken down from his own lips :

"Our father, Aisotto by name, married a woman called Aba from Daridjimell, near Dikoa. In course of time a son was born to them, and to him was given the name Abdullah. When the child was not yet two moons old, the mother went to her farm. Here she laid the sleeping babe in the shade of a small tree, while she went away to gather corn. She was gone for some time, and on return could find no trace of the child. Long she searched in vain, then ran back to the town to ask the aid of her friends.

"All people left work and set out to hunt for the lost child ; but though they sought till nightfall, no trace could be found. Next day, and many days, the woman searched, but all in vain, till at length even she was persuaded to give up the task.

"Nine years later, a hunter set out after bariwa.¹ He started one, and was about to shoot, when he noticed that it was closely followed by a boy. At that the man feared greatly, for he thought : ' This is no true beef, but a bush devil ! ' Later he said to himself : ' Perhaps it is only a lost child ! ' With that he shouted : ' Who are you ? ' The boy looked back at the sound, then ran on the faster, always following the bariwa. The hunter was fleet of foot, so started in chase, and, after a while, tore down a creeper and threw it over the boy, tripping him as he ran. Then he seized his prey and carried him back to the town. All

¹ Gazelle.

the way the lad wept and struggled, but spoke never a word.

"On reaching home, Aisotto and Aba came with the other townsfolk to see the strange creature which the hunter had captured, and, after looking earnestly at the child, the woman said: 'Just this age would my son have been!' The husband answered: 'Perhaps it is our child come back after all these years! Let us take him home!'

"With the hunter's permission this was done, and, after a while, a wise Mallam was called in to make medicine over the boy. Later he prophesied, and said that the child was indeed their son. On this the parents rejoiced greatly. The father killed a goat and fowl, and said to the wanderer: 'You shall no longer be called Abdullah, but Bariwa shall your name be.' So from thenceforward he was known by this name.

"For a long time the boy would have nothing to do with the townsfolk, but sat alone in the house, for he was still quite wild, and thought only how he might escape and go to his foster-mother. After a time, however, the Mallam gave him medicine again, and, little by little, he began to pick up words and grow more like other boys; but never could he be got to eat Bariwa meat.

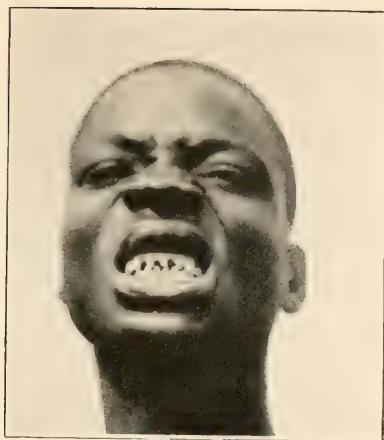
"When he had learned to talk with human speech, he explained that his foster-mother had suckled him like her own kid till he grew big, after which he had followed her to the farms, where she taught him to eat young guinea-corn. He was my own elder brother, but I have not seen him for many years now."

Inquiries elicited that the hero of the story was alive a short time ago, and probably is so still, but news travels slowly from such far-away places, and he has not been heard of quite lately.

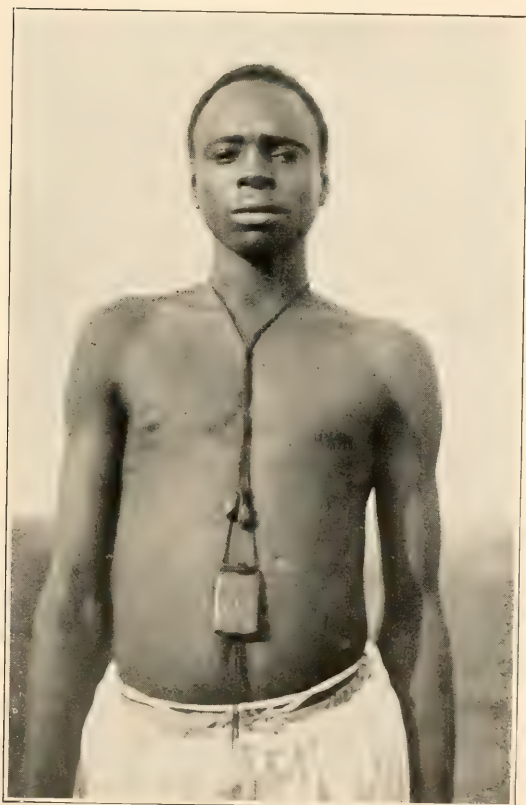
Of the second class of tabu, it need only be mentioned here that none whose soul is supposed to enter at times into the body of any member of the animal or vegetable kingdom may partake of his "affinity."

Many tabu, which come under the third category, affect women who are about to become mothers; but these have already been described.¹

¹ D. Amaury Talbot, *op. cit.* p. 20.



IBIBIO, SHOWING TEETH-FILING.



"MANDARA."

(From the Mandara Hills, south of Lake Chad.)

During war time no man may touch "soft chop," such as pumpkins, soup, or boiled flesh. Only "dry chop," *i.e.* ripe corn, roast plantains and meat, may be eaten, lest both soul and body should become enervated by the use of soft food. In this tabu may be found an echo of that abstinence from fish, for like reasons, chronicled by Clemens Alexandrinus as prevailing among the Egyptians :

διὸ καὶ Αἰγύπτιοι ἐν ταῖς κατ' αὐτοὺς ἀγνείαις . . . καὶ ἰχθύων οὐχ ἄπτονται.¹

Everything cooked must be eaten between dawn and sunset, and, should anything be left over from the night before, it must be thrown away, for a warrior's chop should be both hard and fresh. As in many parts of the world, while on the war-path, it is forbidden to sleep in, or even near, a house in which a woman may be found ; nor may her very existence be recognised during the campaign. Even if unexpectedly recalled to his town, as in the case of Uriah the Hittite, a warrior must avoid his wife, lest the softening influence of feminine arms should, by sympathetic magic, loosen the muscles and weaken the courage, not only of himself, but also of his comrades in the field. Surely in this tabu we have an echo of the very words of Uriah : "As thou livest, and as my soul liveth, I will not do this thing," and even an added light upon the ancient story.

Hunters, like warriors, may only eat dry chop while on the trail. Before starting upon an expedition, they must be careful to take no food, save that cooked upon the day of eating. Nothing left over from the evening before may be touched, lest it should bring them ill-fortune. When hungry or weary during the chase, they may rest by the side of a stream, and, opening their bag, eat of the food prepared, washing it down with draughts of water. When night comes they must sleep within a hollow tree, or high above the ground, amid the branches of some forest giant, safe from the attacks of wild beasts ; or again, Odysseus-like, upon a heap of dry leaves wind piled, or gathered by their own hands, behind sheltering bushes.

When one or two animals have been killed, a little hut

¹ *Stromateis*, vii. C 6, § 33.

may be built in which to sleep and smoke the quarry. Under the shelter of such roofs the "hunter's law" is relaxed somewhat. Soup may here be cooked and eaten, as also the boiled meat from which it was made; but when the rest of the flesh has been preserved and the trail is started once more, the tabu is again in force and only dry chop may be partaken of.

Old women may not touch soup made in deep pots, "lest they receive too much nourishment therefrom, which will cause them to live beyond the allotted span." Neither may their chop be cooked upon logs in which the least trace of sap remains, lest this should act as a rejuvenating influence. Only quite dry and sapless branches may be used for them.

This tabu is most carefully kept. Many an aged crone sits shivering, at night-time, in a far corner rather than venture to warm her withered limbs near the glow of a fire nourished by partially dried logs, while all who hold by old custom would rather starve to death than eat food prepared over such fires. The reason is somewhat pathetic. They fear that, should the tabu be broken, their mothers and grandmothers, instead of waiting to welcome them near the door of the ghost town, will drive them away with harsh words on arriving, and force them to dwell, lonely and kinless, amid outcast wraiths.

An example of such a fate is said to have happened not long ago. An old woman died, and the body was wrapped round with narrow strips of cloth, until it had the appearance of a mummy. Friends and kinsmen gathered for the funeral rites, and the corpse was about to be borne to its last resting-place when the onlookers were horrified to see the wrappings shaken as though the body within was shuddering violently. Every one wondered what could be the reason for this, and, instead of going on with the funeral, they went to question the Idiong priest. The latter consulted the oracle, and then made answer:

"The dead woman trembled because the Shade of her mother drove her away on arriving at the ghost town, since she had eaten from a deep pot and cooked chop over logs in which sap still seethed at the burning."

To old men a special kind of plantain, called by the natives "etere," is forbidden. This is a long fruit growing upon dwarf trees. "Neither may the aged eat okro, lest the spirits of their forebears drive them away for this also when they reach the ghost town."

Small girls, up to about ten years of age, may not taste palm-wine; but this is not forbidden to boys, who, on the other hand, are not allowed to eat cassava-yams nor the strange-looking aerial roots of the wild yam until initiated into the ranks of their first "society." This last-mentioned food is forbidden to all during the making of new farms, as is the eating of cassava itself. New yams may not be tasted among Oronn until after the feast of the Ghosts of Great Men (Osoro 'Nkpi Ekkpo), nor in those parts of Ibibio land, where Ekkpo 'Njawhaw has gained the position of dominant Juju, may they be enjoyed until the cult festival has been carried out.

There is a town named Adebom, near Itinan, where the inhabitants are forbidden to touch food of any kind on the day sacred to their great Juju Obonn. All through the night before and after the festival they may feast as they please, but must fast from dawn to sunset of the day itself. At Ikot Ekpene Udaw the same rule is observed on the feast of the great Juju Eburupabi.

Men who found a new Juju must fast two days before announcing it, while to rain-makers all drink is forbidden "during the time when they are trying to call down the waters from behind the white wall of the sky."

At Ibiaku Itan none of the inhabitants may eat monkey, since some vague totemistic idea seems still to prevail, while at 'Ndiya there are many tabu which only apply to certain families or to those called by particular names. For instance, none called Ukponn may eat of the round coco-yam named Enkpon, since this is forbidden by the Juju Anyan. Should the rule be disobeyed, the transgressor will find his skin covered with yaws. The only way to free oneself from the punishment is to catch a squirrel in the bush and sacrifice it before the Juju. Afterwards the priest sprinkles "medicine" over the penitent, and his skin becomes clear within two weeks. In the same town

no man bearing the name Umaw may eat snails, because this is also forbidden by the Juju Anyan, under like penalty.

None of the inhabitants of 'Ndiya may partake of eggs or fowls, since this is forbidden by the great Juju Isu 'Ndem (the Face of the Juju); should this tabu be broken, the offenders would be struck dead. When an 'Ndiya man or woman marries and goes to another town, the rule still holds for them and for their children.

The people of 'Mbio Okpono, a village not far from the one last named, but a little beyond Itinan, may not touch fish; not, it would appear, from the reason already quoted as binding hunters, but from a belief curiously like that further stated by Clemens Alexandrinus :

*καὶ δι' ἄλλους μὲν τινὰς μύθους, μάλιστα δὲ ὡς πλαδαρὰν τὴν σάρκα τῆς τοιαύτης κατασκευασμένης βρώσεως.*¹

As a substitute, the people of 'Mbio Okpono devour lizards in large quantities and also the giant millipedes common to this part of the country, which, so far as could be learnt, all other towns seem to regard with horror. On asking why these ugly but harmless creatures should be dreaded even more than their by no means innocuous relatives, the centipedes, we were told as follows :

"Ibibio people always suspect these things, because they keep by themselves in the bush, as though they had some wicked secret, and never mix with other beasts. If you see a millipede enter your house, you know that it is a sign of coming trouble, since they never approach man with good intent."

This dread of millipedes is far-reaching. In Benin they were thought too unclean for any man to touch, and if one entered the Obba's palace, it had to be removed alive on a stick. If any one actually touched it, that person was killed.

One day while talking on the subject with an Efik chief, he told us that a few months before, at Calabar, a son of one of the late chiefs "was dining quietly at home, robed only in a loin cloth, when one of these creatures fell from the roof upon his bare back. He shouted to some people

¹ *Stromateis*, vii. 6. 34.



THE OBBA OF BENIN.

who were outside : ' Come quickly and see what has fallen upon me.' Now such things cling so tightly that it is not possible to pull them off with the hand, lest they leave their feet in your flesh, and the place inflames. The only way to deal with them is to make a matchet red hot in the fire and lay this upon them. Whenever they fall upon a man, their touch causes pain and swelling. When a palm tree is cut for the making of mimbo, they climb up the trunk and drink the sap as it flows. Also they can spring very far. The best way to kill one of them is to put fire upon it, after which, if you listen, you will hear it go off pa-ou-ou—just like a little revolver. There is no tabu against eating these things in our part, for none of our people would let so unclean a thing pass their lips."

There is a law that children should not be allowed to eat with their elders, partly, it is said, because small folk do not take care to keep their hands clean ; but also because, throughout a great part of the Ibibio country, there is a strict rule that no disturbance may be made during meals, " and it is well known that children always quarrel over theirs. Even in cases when they are permitted to eat with their parents, as is now sometimes done, they have their own dish, from which alone they may help themselves."

" When a man has but one son, of whom he is very fond, he will sometimes make a habit of eating with the child ; but in that case his wife is often excluded."

No Juju priest may partake of the flesh of crocodiles, nor may he eat the shell-fish *Voluta* or *Fasciolaria*, because these are sacred to the Ibibio Aphrodite. The shells are to be found by many sacred waters and beneath innumerable Juju sheds, and so greatly are they dreaded that many a so-called Christian who, with the utmost unconcern, will perjure himself upon the Bible, will yet draw back appalled, and recant every lie he has told should such a shell be pointed toward him.

Some great Juju men, of whom Akpan Ibok of Ikot Akpa Ofuk is a well-known example, are forbidden to eat save alone. If any of their food remains over after a meal, it must be carefully buried, according to the law of the

Juju. Should any one else eat of it he would fall ill, and probably die unless offerings were brought in time to purge away his offence.

There is a Juju in the last-mentioned town, the name of which is Adat Ukot. When sacrifices are offered to this, the members of the cult must finish up everything before the sun sets, as with the miraculous manna of the Israelites. No scrap may be left over till the morrow. After the feast is ended, the remains, to the smallest morsel, must be gathered together and flung into the bush sacred to the Juju.

Among the most important tabu are those connected with the Earth Goddess and the Ancestors, any infraction of which necessitated a sacrifice to these powers. Amongst all Ibibio, sexual intercourse with mother and sister was forbidden, and, in nearly all cases, with half-sister, father's or brother's wives, and sometimes even friends' wives. Over a great part of Southern Nigeria cohabitation in the bush or farm is not allowed, and transgressors of this law were in many places expelled from their town—at any rate for a time. A menstruous woman is generally confined to a separate room, and may never prepare her husband's, or any man's, food.

The tabu against the birth of twin children and of those born feet foremost, etc., are given on p. 205. In the same way a cow which gives birth to twins, and a hen which crows like a cock, are killed and thrown away.

Ibibio have not, like most Ibo, a large number of food tabu. The only animals, so far as I know, which are forbidden to the whole tribe are certain species of snake, though monkeys, lizards, wild cats, rats, in addition to those already mentioned in this chapter, are not permitted to some towns and families.¹

Of those things which are tabu, either because they are considered holy in themselves or as belonging to some Juju, the sacred fish, Offott, are the chief, though in many ways they may be taken as coming equally under the headings of totems or affinities. Further details concerning them are given in the description of the Lake of Life

¹ War tabu are also discussed in the next chapter.

near Ikotobo,¹ of Ubium Creek,² of the Pool of Edogho Ukwa at Eket,³ and of that of Isu 'Ndemmm at 'Ndiya.⁴ Indeed such instances might be multiplied almost indefinitely, for, in this respect, the tribes of the District and many neighbouring peoples seem to have followed the customs of the Syrians, described by Xenophon :

μετὰ ταῦτα Κῦρος ἐξελαύνει σταθμοὺς τέτταρας παρασάγγας εἴκοσιν ἐπὶ τον Χάλον ποταμόν, ὄντα τὸ εὖρος πλέθρον, πλήρη δ' ἰχθύων μεγάλων καὶ πραέων, οὓς οἱ Σύροι θεοὺς ἐνόμιζον καὶ ἀδικεῖν οὐκ εἶων.⁵ ("After this, Cyrus proceeded four days' march, a distance of twenty parasangs, to the river Chalus, which is a plethrum in breadth and full of large tame fish, which the Syrians looked upon as gods, and allowed no one to injure.")

Compare also Diodorus Siculus :

διὸ καὶ τοὺς Σύρους μέχρι τοῦ νῦν ἀπέχεσθαι τούτου τοῦ ζώου καὶ τιμᾶν τοὺς ἰχθύς ὥς θεούς.⁶

Any infraction of this tabu was always followed by the death of the transgressor ; usually through the medium of sleeping sickness which is so prevalent in the neighbourhood. As an example of many such, the following instance may be given.

"In one of the holy pools, not far from Eket, it is said that the sacred fish multiplied to such an extent that the water was black with them. The second chief of the place, Akpabio Udaw Adio, had grown to despise the old law ; so, in the night time, he called together those of his people who were of like mind with himself, and with these went down to the sacred pool, bearing lamps by the light of which they killed many fish.

"Next morning the mimbo people chanced to go by on their way to the palm grove. In passing, they glanced at the pool, but saw no fish, only trampled mud where the wrongdoers had stood. Filled with fear at the sight, the men ran back to town with the news and asked : ' Who killed the fish ? '

"Akpabio kept silence as to what he had done, so the townsfolk went before the Juju and said : ' You

¹ P. 23.

² P. 231.

³ P. 37.

⁴ P. 11.

⁵ *Anabasis*, i. 4. 9.

⁶ *Bibliotheca Historica*, ii. 4.

yourself must seek out and punish the man who has done this thing ! ’

“ Not long afterwards sleeping sickness fell upon the guilty chief, so he went to the Idiong priest and asked the cause of his malady. The latter consulted the oracle and said :

“ ‘ The illness is sent in punishment for what you did three months ago. Now, therefore, confess before all the town that you slew the sacred fish.’ ”

“ Akpabio could not bring himself to make open confession, because it was so shameful a thing to have done. For a while he lingered ; then died as a punishment for having taken the lives of the fish, in each of which had dwelt a soul.”

These sacred fish are venerated over the greater part of the District, but most deeply of all among the Ubium. The matter once touched us very nearly.

This people, almost alone of those in the District, had refused to listen to the calumnies of disaffected elements, angered on account of the discovery and consequent suppression of various malpractices. This refusal I gratefully trace, in the first place, to the influence of Dr. Foran and Mr. Eakin, whose devoted example and brilliant medical and educational work could hardly fail of effect upon those among whom their lives were passed.

A few evenings after our fortunate escape from the first attempt to kill us, we were sitting on the verandah of a little Rest-house built above the Cross River, when three dusky forms silently appeared from out the surrounding darkness. They were the head chiefs of Ikotobo, and had come because of a new terror with which they had been threatened, apparently with the idea of driving them into the conspiracy against us. In accents husky with fear, they asked if it were true that I had ordered tonite to be used in clearing Ubium Creek of the tree-trunks with which it was blocked.

I answered that this was not so ; but, struck by the intense earnestness with which they hung upon the reply, asked if they would have any particular objection to such a course.

For once anxiety swept away reserve. A torrent of agonized entreaty burst forth, and the reason for the unwillingness which they had shown, when asked to help in opening up the creek, was made plain. In low intense tones the head chief began :

“ Deep down in the waters of this creek, houses may be found like those which the white ants build upon land. Amid these dwellings live great fish with skins black like our own. In these fish are the souls of our ancestors, and should you order tonite to be used near their dwellings, many would be killed ; while for each thus slain one of our people would also die. The old gods have given us guardians for them, a leopard to walk up and down on the bank and drive off danger by land, and pythons which swim to and fro in the water, killing all hurtful creatures ; while, above all, soar fish eagles, black and white, which drop down palm kernels into the river that the fish in which dwell our souls may eat them and be glad.

“ Now, therefore, when wicked men urged us to join with the other tribes to kill our District Commissioner and the white women who are with him, we refused, saying :

“ ‘ Why should we slay a man who has never harmed us ; but, on the contrary, took steps to safeguard the sacred lake where other of our soul affinities dwell, under the protection of the great mother Isu Ma, and, moreover, promised to punish those who would harm the place or its denizens.’ When they spoke of the tonite we trembled with fear, and a few of our people said : ‘ Let us join to kill the white man, lest he slay our souls and we perish ’ ; but others answered : ‘ We will first go up and speak with him face to face, as is the custom of those white men whom we know.’ ”

I would remark that this is no mean tribute to the influence of Mr. Eakin and Dr. Foran. No one is quicker than the unsophisticated African to see below the surface and estimate character at its true worth. To the clear vision of such men the veneer of civilisation shrinks into a mere “invisible cloak,” while the primitive virtues of courage and truth count for just everything. To the honour of the so-called “savage,” be it said, the strong,

straight man is far more truly respected than his better-liked more easy-going brother. I would venture, moreover, to point out here how important to officials is the study of what one of my kind critics lately styled "the infant science of anthropology." Without the guidance of such a mistress it is impossible, even for the best intentioned, to avoid the many pitfalls spread round the feet of the ignorant, in a state of affairs so different from that to which most white men are accustomed.

To Mr. Eakin I owe the knowledge of the anxiety expressed by the Ikotobo chiefs lest the spread of Christianity, and consequent decay of the old laws, should lead daring spirits to profane the solitudes of the sacred pool and ensnare the fish which dwell in its waters. Such an attempt had been made by a youth of revolutionary tendencies, only a few weeks before. The chiefs went at once to Mr. Eakin, who kindly informed me, with the result that it was announced in Court that any one attempting to profane places hallowed by the tradition of centuries, or to harm totemistic or other creatures held sacred by the tribe, would be punished with the utmost severity in my power.

As will be seen, my action in this matter was the principal cause in holding back the people of Ikotobo from joining the conspiracy against us, and their abstention probably kept other Ibibio from taking more decisive action. This again saved the expense of a punitive expedition which would probably have been sent to avenge us, and spared to the tribe the awful misery involved by such a punishment.

Truly, though "a little knowledge is," indubitably, "a dangerous thing," the want of ever so small a piece of information may prove equally dangerous, and with every month spent among people such as these, the importance of anthropological study for all whose lot is cast among primitive tribes is more and more strongly borne in upon me.

CHAPTER XVII

WAR—THE SHEDDING OF BLOOD—THE SCAPEGOAT

BEFORE warriors start on the war-path, it is customary to offer a sacrifice to the chief fetish of the town. All the inhabitants join in this ceremony, and afterwards each of the chosen band submits himself to the "Shot and Matchet Juju," the principal rites of which consist in the priest rubbing magic leaves over the whole body of the warrior, in order to render him invulnerable, and a black Juju powder over his face to make him invisible to his opponents. When each had been protected in this way, another ceremony was performed. A great "medicine" was made and a fresh sacrifice offered, during the slaying of which the priest called upon the "soul names" of the strongest and most famous warriors among the enemy, adjuring these to leave their bodies and come at his bidding; so that in the day of battle they might be soulless, and therefore powerless to fight.

In the war-shed at Ikot Ibiuk, a village near Eket, may be seen a section of tree-trunk, hollowed bowl-wise, some three feet in diameter and encircled by a string of buffalo skulls. Medicines mixed, according to my informant, of magic leaves, human blood and that of buffaloes—the latter regarded hereabouts as the symbol of brute strength—was poured therein, and of this potion each warrior was given to drink before starting out for the scene of action.

On the conclusion of the rites, the band of fighting men form into line, and without word spoken, start straight for the enemy's town. From necks and wrists hang many charms: leopard claws in chains or pendants to give courage and skill, and little bags containing magic roots

and leaves to act as an additional talisman against bullets. Fish-eagle feathers, too, are sometimes worn by chiefs, as a means of acquiring the strength and keen vision of these sacred birds.

As the band of warriors march through the town, they must pass along without saluting any woman whom they chance to meet. Neither may they look backwards, nor still less return, even a few steps, on any pretext whatever. The tabu on food is recorded in the last chapter; here, therefore, it is enough to say that, as among the Dyaks,¹ so Ibibio warriors never eat "soft food," such as pumpkin or soup, and, while on the march, must avoid the dwelling-place of any woman. Neither may they pass through water which women use either as a bathing or washing place; but, if it is impossible to avoid this altogether by making a *détour*, must march for a considerable distance up stream before crossing.

While on the road no one may touch any part of a warrior's body, lest contact with another under the protection of a different "medicine" should counteract the effect of his own. Here, however, there is no law against a man himself touching his head or indeed any limb. If bitten by insects, or suffering irritation from skin disease or other cause, it is forbidden to scratch the part, "lest even so small a sound should betray your presence to an enemy. All that is permitted is to lay a hand softly upon the spot."

So soon as the first shots are heard, it is allowable, as an extra safeguard, to chew some of the magic roots or leaves with which the little wallet-shaped amulets are filled; but this must on no account be done before the firing starts, otherwise the transgressor will go mad and lose himself amid his enemies. When the smoke of the battle grows so dense that it is no longer possible to see the foe clearly from a distance, men drop their guns and rush into the thick of the fight, armed only with sword or machet, but secure that no harm can befall them since the Juju has made them invulnerable.

Should a man become wounded in spite of all safeguards, the misfortune is explained by a supposed breach of Juju

¹ Haddon, *op. cit.* p. 10.

law inadvertently committed, or by the superior power of the enemy's magic. In such a case, instead of washing the wound with hot water as was the usual custom, the native doctor used to go into the bush and cut a stick the size of the gash. This substitute was washed and tended as though it were the real wound, until by sympathetic magic the injured flesh grew whole.

At times, instead of a stick another part of the body was treated as if the wound were there ; for instance, should a gash have been made in the thigh an arm would probably be chosen for attention.

Not long ago, at 'Ndiya, one of the Juju Images slashed at the head of a woman named Adiaha Udaw Anwa, cutting it twice in the form of a rough cross. The native doctor tried to cure her, for the injury was very grave. To do this he first tied a soft rope round her forehead ; then dipped a cloth in hot water and held it to the base of the back and pit of the stomach. Medicine was also rubbed upon her neck. The real wound was left untouched, save that occasionally a feather was dipped in oil and drawn lightly over the dried blood to soften it.¹ The woman was healed but the scars are clearly to be seen.

Before an engagement, scouts are sometimes sent forward, secretly, to a place through which the enemy is expected to pass. Arrived there, they sprinkle " medicine " upon the leaves and ground, and so soon as this comes in contact with the skin of the hostile warriors, even the bravest and most hardened begin to shout and howl with pain. Men are said to have gone mad from the irritation thus produced.

Perhaps it may be well to mention here a personal experience which seems to show the possibility of such a measure. During my first tour in Africa, while I served as Assistant Commissioner on the Anglo-Liberian Boundary Commission, our way took us through thick bush in the as yet unexplored interior. Some strange-looking fruits hung from a liane not far from the line of march, and I picked one in order to examine it. Hardly had this been done than my gun-boy flung everything down, and seizing

¹ Cf. *A late Discourse . . . by Sir Kenelm Digby, Kt., Touching the Cure of Wounds by the Powder of Sympathy* (1658).

my arm, shook it so suddenly and violently that the fruit dropped from my grasp. Others hurried up and, as I did not understand their language, made signs that I must wash. It was growing late and I wished to press on, so thought that it would be better to wait till we came to the next stream rather than go back to one passed a few minutes before. The men, however, positively dragged me back, and even before the brink was reached, the reason of their solicitude was made plain. My hand began to burn and smart unendurably, and I was glad enough to thrust it into the water. The attendants took up handfuls of sand from the bed and violently scrubbed the palm, afterwards binding it up in cool wet leaves. This treatment probably saved the hand and possibly the arm also, for when we reached camp I was told that the poison was so virulent that hand and arm would have become inflamed, and had there been the least scratch might even have mortified. This may have been an exaggeration, but certainly there was no doubt as to the intense irritation produced by handling the fruit.

According to Chief Daniel Henshaw the Oronn method of warfare differs somewhat from that of neighbouring tribes. "In 1880," he said, "fighting broke out between the towns of Afaha Esuk and Ikonor, and this continued till 1902 when Government sent an Expedition to stop them. Sometimes for weeks not a gun was fired on either side. A favourite method of attack was to choose out some compound at a distance from all others. A path was then cut through the thick bush, almost up to the house but screened from it. There a small force of the enemy waited until one of the male inhabitants was seen to leave his dwelling. Sometimes a chief went forth to bathe in the stream near by. A gun sounded from out the bush, and he fell dead, while the enemy ran away by the secret path they had made, knowing that the townsfolk were not likely to find this unless they stumbled upon it by accident. Often after such a catastrophe the dead man's kin would gather weeping round the corpse, and thus give their foes a further chance to shoot. No women were killed during war-time, so it was customary for the wives of a chief to surround him in a protective

ring, whether sitting or sleeping in his house, or going to farm.

“A favourite plan for obtaining intelligence was to bribe some neutral town by means of money or cattle to bring news should they hear that any of the chief foemen were likely to be coming along a certain road on a fixed date. Then, on the homeward way, shots would ring out from a hidden enemy, and their town would welcome them no more.

“In the night time, too, a small band would often creep up to a house, the inmates of which all lay sleeping, and start to pour water at a certain spot upon the mud wall of one of the outside rooms. When this had been done they were able to dig away the soft clay with their fingers, soundlessly and little by little, until a hole was made large enough to look through and find out where the head of that particular family lay. After ascertaining this, they inserted the muzzle of a gun and fired. It is to guard against such a fate that even now, when Oronn Chiefs build a compound, they usually make the principal sleeping-room right in the centre, with thick, low, mud walls built as a protection on either side of the couch.”

To guard a path in war-time, the hand and arm of an enemy were usually cut off and suspended from a tree at the junction with the main thoroughfare. People did not venture along a road thus guarded. A further protection was to hew down big branches and lay these across the entrance. Occasionally a cut stone was borne from the Juju-house and erected in the middle of the path, with round ones at its base. Goats were then sacrificed and their blood poured over the stones, while the names of dead members of the principal “societies” of the village or settlement to be guarded were called upon to act as sentinels.

When one town decides to make war upon another, the inhabitants send two men to lay a plantain leaf upon the road before the enemy's town. On this, little piles of powder, shot, and caps are laid as a declaration of hostilities. During our last tour a similar intimation, with the addition of a small gun, carved from wood, was sent to the Commissioner in charge of a neighbouring District,

as a sign that a section of his people declared war upon him.

Along the Cross River, kola nuts, salt, and pepper were all used as warnings of the outbreak of danger. Hereabouts kola nuts are usually formed in four sections, one of which is called the "head" and another the "tail." Should a man threatened by some peril come to the house of a friend who has been bound by oath not to disclose the danger, the host, in presenting the usual offering of kola nuts, holds them in his outstretched hand—the "head" towards the wrist, the "tail" towards the fingers, thus pointing in the direction of the visitor, and the other two sections cross-wise, one on each side.

"When the guest is a wise man, he looks carefully at such an offering and notices which way the nuts lie. Should they be placed as described above, he calls to mind that the dead are always borne feet first, so grasps the meaning of the sign. In such a case he at once hurries home along a different road from that by which he came, so as to avoid the enemies lurking to kill him on his return journey.

"Often women born of a hostile town or family fear to give their husbands a direct warning as to threatened danger lest they might later be accused of so doing by their own people and be unable to clear themselves of the charge by swearing the contrary on their native Juju, and so escaping vengeance. In such a case a wife cooks for her husband but puts *no salt* in the food. When the man eats, he sometimes gets annoyed and says: 'You have forgotten to put salt in my chop! Go and bring this at once.' The woman stands with folded arms, saying nothing, but looking very fixedly upon her mate, and not making the least motion to obey.

"Then, if the husband is a clever man, he will read the meaning of her behaviour; but if not, he will call again, more angrily: 'Do you not hear? I tell you to bring salt!' Slowly, slowly, the woman fetches it, but will not put it in; so the man is forced to do this for himself. Should she sleep with him that night, sometimes she sighs softly through the darkness: 'Did I ever forget to put salt in your chop before?' Then at length, if he

is in the least wise, he will understand ; but if not, on the morrow, she brings saltless food again. After this, unless he is unusually stupid, he will see that it means : ' Danger threatens. Flee away.'

" Such, among our people, is the sign of the salt. Should a man be very fond of pepper, this is sometimes omitted in the same way and with like meaning."

So long as fighting continued, the old people left at home came out daily upon their verandahs and there made the " war juju of the aged " ; praying all the time for the success of their warriors. Till peace had been proclaimed, no old man might partake of any food left over from the day before, but this tabu did not apply to women.

Save among the North-eastern Ibibio, where no notice was usually given, fighting generally started at the boundary on a day fixed by the two parties. All men taken were killed and their heads struck off and carried home. In most regions on the capture of a town it was sacked and burnt, and the children were seized and often sold into slavery, while the women usually experienced the same fate.

The weapons in common use were Dane guns and matchets ; in addition the Eket and Northern Ibibio employed spears, and some of the latter bows and unpoisoned arrows.

When one of the parties wished to make peace, they sent some friend from a neutral town, or one of their own men, clothed in palm-leaves and white baft, and holding " Alligator " peppers in his hand, to the enemy. If the proposal was accepted, both sides met on the boundary and sacrificed a goat and dog and sometimes a cow. A chief from another town often divided a palm-leaf among the parties. As a rule women were not allowed to be present on such an occasion.

The old rule of a life for a life still holds good among Ibibio, and so firmly do they believe in the right of the relatives of a man who has been killed to exact the death of some member of the slayer's family, that they speak of it in open court as though even white man's law and justice must concede them this.

Such a case came before me at Idua Oronn on August 12, 1913. During the course of the trial Ekkpoikwaw of Edikpo stated on oath, in substance, as follows :

" There was a land case between my family and that of Okong 'Nye Utip. The matter was taken to the Supreme Court, but before the case was decided one side went to cut palm trees on the disputed land. So fighting began. Accused's brother was wounded and afterwards died. This was about five years ago. The other side came and reported to the District Commissioner that our people had killed a man, and they therefore claimed one to kill in exchange, or goods to the same value, according to custom. The District Commissioner refused their request. About two months ago accused again said he wanted to kill a man in our family. So we have brought the case before you."

Okong 'Nye Utip stated :

" I called upon plaintiff's family to supply us with a girl to marry into our family. It was not we who waked up the case again. The other side sent a message to Chief Ekpe Eyo of Eyo Udaw to ask him to say to my family : ' Towns used to fight together and then make peace. How much more so when one family fought another ! ' We sent to them saying : ' Before we make peace, you must send us a girl.' According to old custom when such an one was sent, so soon as she had grown up, she was married to one of the family. Then her son was given the name of the dead man and succeeded to all his property. When, however, prosecutor's family heard our request, they answered : ' You may send us to heaven above before we give you a girl ! ' More also they said : ' We are ready to take any oath that it was not we who killed your brother.'"

A very celebrated warrior medicine man, about whose brave deeds many legends have arisen, was Akanam of Ikot Udaw Ede. So strong was this hero reported to be, that it is said he could lay his hands upon a palm tree by the water-side and bend it till the crown of leaves swept the ground. After performing this feat, Akanam would take a stone and pour over it the blood of a white fowl and of a bush squirrel. He then laid the stone in running water near

to the bank. Then when a band of the enemy passed by, the tree would spring up, scattering death and destruction among them.

The story of the death of this warrior and of his bearing off to the land of Abassi on the wings of the birds of the air is almost identical with that of Ebiribong given on page 114.

From the spot where he lay before the birds raised him sprang the Cotton Tree of Ikot Udaw Ede.

Chief Inaw of Ikotobo declares that in this case his own grandfather was present, and testified to the truth of the heavenward ascent of Akanam.

The rule as to the conduct of Oronn warfare was much like that regulating a game, for peace was not supposed to be concluded until exactly the same number of people had been killed on both sides. "The reason why the fight between Ikonor and Afaha Esuk went on so long was that the first-named town killed so many enemies during the first skirmishes, and the longer the fight continued more and more fell to their guns. When Government tried to bring about the cessation of hostilities, the men of Afaha Esuk answered stubbornly: 'No! Not until an equal number have been slain on their side.' If one of the parties failed to inflict the same loss upon the enemy, peace could only be bought by paying heavy compensation. When a town was taken it was either burnt or razed to the ground, while all women and children were sold into slavery. Even the land on which to build a new town had to be ransomed back from the conquerors.

"For the peace ceremony both sides brought a goat and a dog in sacrifice. The head of the first was struck off, but a sharpened stake was driven through the dog's jaws from beneath. The goat's head was then transfixed on the same stick, which was thereupon hung up so that the wretched dog died by slow torture.

"Medicine leaves were spread upon the ground. Upon this bed a quantity of eggs were laid and the blood of the goats sprinkled over all. The chief men from both parties then came forward, and bending down on opposite sides of the barrier, crushed eggs, leaves, and blood together in their hands, and with the mixture smeared the faces of their

whilom foes, saying: 'To-day we make peace together. We must not see one another's blood any more.'

"After this they divided the flesh of the goats and many other things which had been cooked meantime. Then they ate, drank, sang and were glad because the war was over."

After such a ceremony each warrior went back to his town bearing the heads of those whom he had slain. At every stream which he crossed on the way home, he had to pause and bathe, then rub medicine over himself "to stay the avenging power of the blood which was shed." Without conforming to this purification, he might neither enter his house nor approach any of his wives.

Blood itself is supposed to have strange efficacy, reminding one of that dread libation guarded by the sword of mighty Odysseus, from which the wraiths of friends and companions, long dead, drew force and voice with which to speak to him. Blood is the great strength-giver, the great fertiliser. When Ibeno youths of good family came to man's estate it was customary until quite late years to kill a slave and place the severed head in the hands of the young heir, that he might lick up the fresh-flowing blood.

In olden days human blood, as the greatest of all fertilisers, was shed in floods at the time of the new yam planting, and what may well be a survival of this custom is still carried out by Oronn on the occasion of the feast of Abassi Isua, *i.e.* the god of the year.¹ Now that human victims are forbidden, and only the lives of animals may be taken for this purpose, many a strange observance has been substituted. For instance, not long ago a rich husbandman, named Ishi, cut a small piece from the lobe of a poor man's ear and drew therefrom a few drops of blood to pour out before the god of the new farms. The man was well paid for the slight mutilation, and seemed more than content.

A similar ceremony was carried out at the festival of the Aztec maize-goddess Chicomecohuatl, during which blood was also drawn from the ears of her votaries. "The blood so drawn was kept in vessels, which were not scoured, so that a dry crust formed over it."²

¹ See p. 267.

² Sir James Frazer, *The Scapegoat*, pp. 292, 294.

With regard to this latter point it may perhaps be worth mentioning that among the Juju objects of a celebrated fetish priest condemned to penal servitude at the Assizes for an attempt on my life a little lustre jug was found. All lustre ware, according to Mary Kingsley, was set apart as sacred to "Juju," and this particular vessel was said to have been dipped in the blood of each fresh victim and then left to dry. It was never cleaned, and only after hours of soaking, followed by vigorous scrubbing, could the many layers be removed and the original surface be brought to view.

When Ibibio men are wounded, whether in fighting or otherwise, tradition bids them hide the flow of blood from the eyes of any woman, that none of these may see strength ebb away from the dominant male. After the wound has dried over, it does not matter so much for a woman to see it. There is no reason why men should not witness the life-blood flow from the veins of a woman, however. All things feminine are, comparatively, of such little account that it cannot matter for a man to behold one of this inferior sex reduced to the utmost point of weakness and feebleness.

Human blood is looked upon as a great protection both from poison and from ghosts. The best way of using it is to mix it with Juju medicine and then rub this into a small cut made in the body of the man seeking safety. Thus guarded, whether he walks by day or night, neither poisons nor ghosts have power to harm him. With the same intent blood is mixed with the ghost-powder which is rubbed on the forehead, slightly above the junction of the brows, and also between the thumb and first finger of each hand.

As a general rule sacrificial animals are killed by having their throats cut. The body is then dragged round so that the blood sprinkles all the ground. In the case of a goat, two men usually swing and shake it so that the blood falls not only upon the earth but is splashed over the fetish itself.

Before most Jujus to which prayers for health are made, some of the blood of the fowls sacrificed is poured upon the head of the petitioner with the words, "Efera fi" (Be cold),

i.e. " May you be free from fever ! " During some rites the blood of the sacrifices is also sprinkled over the feet of the spectators.

Those warriors who play the Ekong (war) play before setting forth for battle pour goat's blood into a bowl and drink it, because by so doing they hope to imbibe new strength and valour ; while, as already described, the most solemn oaths are sworn upon the 'Mbiam Juju, part of the ceremony of which consists in drinking palm-wine into which a few drops of blood from each of the contracting parties has been poured.¹ This oath is often administered to a band of warriors before setting forth for battle in order to guard against treason in their ranks.

On return from a successful campaign, Efik used to bury the skulls of slain enemies in the black mud and ooze of some swamp, then set a sign to mark the spot. After several months had passed by, they went back and dug up the gruesome trophies, washed them clean and brought them home to the town.

To celebrate this a great play was given : guns were fired, and there was much singing and rejoicing. Each woman carried a piece of chalk, and, as a warrior drew near, he held out his arms to her, the hands straight and palms downward. With the chalk she drew a line from shoulder to finger-tips, calling out " Ekong Umioko ! " *i.e.* " The war is finished ! " to show her joy at the home-coming. The man repeated " Umioko ! " " It is finished ! "

Among other Ibibio it was usual to boil the heads of slain enemies in a pot, then scrape off all flesh and keep the skull in the house as a trophy of valour, to be set, in the end, upon the grave of the victor. Many such trophies are to be seen near Itak.

Head-hunting is common over the greater part of Central and Eastern Nigeria, and there can be little doubt that the youthful desire to join the club of the Ubio Owo, or men-killers, which in some regions, especially among the Eastern Ibo, possessed a greater prestige than any other, was the cause of many " wars."

A skull was also necessary for membership in the

¹ See p. 46.

principal secret societies. So valuable are they that where a grave is not considered safe against desecration, it is carefully hidden.¹

Among most Ibibio a war dance and play were given as soon as the skulls had been cleaned; sacrifices were made to the latter, apparently as an inducement to the slain warrior to bring his friends, in order that they might meet the same fate. In the north-west, however, no offering was made to the skull till the death of its owner.

Should the slayer find that the ghost of the slain is very strong and is haunting him to his hurt, he offers a dog to the manes of his foe. If this sacrifice proves unavailing, he catches a male lizard, and, with this carefully caged, goes to a place where cross-roads meet. There, by the wayside, he makes a tiny gallows, and taking out the substitute from its prison, passes it three times round his head, crying: "Here I give you a man instead of me. Take him and leave me free." After this he places a thin loop of tie-tie round the neck of the lizard and hangs it upon the miniature gallows.

The principle of the scapegoat indeed is well known among this people. At Edebom near Etinan, for instance, before the new farms are planted, hunters assemble and go out to trap a bush cat. When one has been caught, the townsfolk are called together. A sacrifice is offered before the assembled company; the animal is then held on high and passed round the head of each inhabitant in turn, with the words: "Mfinn nyinn ibaw kpru-kpru afanikong ke obio nyinn," *i.e.* "To-day we take all trouble from our town." After this a fowl and goat are brought forward. From the ears of the latter and of the bush cat small pieces are cut and a few drops of blood from each drained into the Juju pot—after which all three animals are driven forth into the bush, bearing with them the sins of the town. This method, though neither so romantic, tragic, nor humorous as those described in Sir James Frazer's *Scapegoat*—that wonderful volume of a stupendous work—had, at least, not the ill effect resulting from the method employed by the lady of King Dandaki!²

¹ See p. 149.

² *Scapegoat*, p. 41.

Several other instances of passing an offering round the head before sacrificing it have been found among Ibibio. In some cases this is done with fowls, which calls to mind that, among the Talmud Jews of Poland, "On the day preceding the day of atonement a cock is swung round the head of each male, and a hen round the head of each female, and then killed and eaten as an expiatory offering to redeem the sinner from death."¹

Another way of driving out evil influences was practised among the Efik of Henshaw Town, Calabar. On the eve of the native New Year the townsfolk used to play the play called *Edi Tuak 'Ndokk*. In preparation for this, images formed of grass and bound round with mats of plaited rushes were prepared. These effigies were named 'Nabikum, and at least one of them was tied against every verandah. The Reverend Hope-Waddell, in describing the ceremony as performed in his day, states that the images were often in animal form. Chief Daniel Henshaw, on the contrary, has never seen any but what he calls "Judases," *i.e.* Guy Fawkes-like figures roughly resembling human beings. It is possible that the earlier effigies represented family "affinities" or totemistic animals. His account of the ceremony, which he had often witnessed, but which has now been suppressed, runs as follows :

"At about two o'clock on the last night of the old year the inhabitants of each compound ran round it, calling :

<i>Ete</i>	<i>mio !</i>	<i>Eka</i>	<i>mio !</i>
Father	mine !	Mother	mine !
<i>Ekkpo</i>	<i>yakk onyon !</i>	<i>Ekkpo</i>	<i>yakk onyon !</i>
Devils	must go !	Devils	must go !

Gongs were played, 'poom, poom !' Torches were lighted and the burning wood knocked against the walls in every corner, while the cry, 'Devils must go,' was ceaselessly called. Each pot and pan was beaten that none of the spirits might find shelter behind it, but all the old year's evil ghosts should be driven forth to perish, and the whole town be freed from their influence, and remain quiet and prosperous throughout the new year.

¹ Featherman, *Social History of the Races of Mankind*, iii. p. 407.

“ Next morning every scrap of cooked food or drop of drink left over from the night before had to be thrown away, together with any cracked or broken pans and the sticks used for driving forth the devils. The 'Nabikum were burnt, and their ashes strewn to the four winds. Then all the compounds were swept clean, the water jars refilled and a play given, in which the whole town joined. Next night a heavy rain was said to fall without fail, and this was called in the language of Calabar,

Ukpōri ikpatt ekkpō.
Sweep feet devils.”

CHAPTER XVIII

FIRE AND THE CELESTIAL LUMINARIES

IN this strange region of water and marsh-land the elements enter into the lives of the people with a nearness and intimacy unknown in Northern latitudes. Isong, the Earth Mother, holds her children very close to her breast. The cradling arms of the water lap the land on every side ; while fire, which in our cold North mostly means the gentle glow of the hearth, or the terrible destroyer, annihilating in a few hours the hoarded treasures of centuries, somehow seems in Africa to mean so infinitely more. Whether girdling a desert camp with its ring of flame, and thereby acting as guardian against the fierce-eyed, keen-fanged denizens of the wild wastes beyond ; or raging, reaper-like, amid the lush green of the Southern Nigerian bush, felling its luxuriant growth, thus clearing and preparing the land for the planting of new farms : for pure riot of colour, such a bush fire, seen as dusk is falling, could hardly be surpassed.

One evening we sat near the Rest-house at Ikotobo, watching the light fade from the West, when a glow that was none of the sunset's began to show through the twilight.

Against a sky of indescribably beautiful blue, clouds of smoke floated upward, curve upon curve, their ivory-white touched here and there with wavering gold and amber. Billow upon billow they rose, glowing now and again with softest rose or flooded with mauve like that of fields of autumn crocuses by the spinney-side at home. In the foreground a line of palm trees sprang sharp and clear above the level of the encircling bush, bitumen-dark against the opalescent background ; while, from beneath,

stabs of orange and vermilion shot through the shadows as the fierce flames leapt to view, and, at times, a burst of sparkles was thrown upward, toward the tender sky, to fall again in a shower of tiny stars.

When, as sometimes happens, such a fire rages through the vegetation, tearing its way to the shore of creek or river, the sight is surely, for sheer beauty, like nothing else on earth: unless, indeed, to compare small things with great, it brings to mind, in colouring at least, Vesuvius as we last saw him, flinging fountains of flame above snow-covered slopes, the whole mirrored in the wonderful bay at his feet.

In lands where such demonstrations of the splendour and power of fire are matters of constant occurrence, it is not to be wondered at that many rites of fire-worship, such as died out among us centuries ago, should here still form part of the life of the race. On a certain day in the wet season some towns, for instance, make two great bonfires, one on each side of the road. Then they gather their cattle, sheep, and goats into a herd and drive them between the walls of flame. This ceremony is said to destroy evil influences which might otherwise have caused sickness to fall upon the beasts during the year, and is also considered to act as a fecundative agent.

According to several witnesses a great fire play is given on certain occasions at Ikot Eyo near Ikotobo. A bonfire six feet high and about as many yards square is made. Round this, first at a respectful distance, then in ever-narrowing circles, the people dance. Suddenly some break from the ring and, rushing forward, spring into the flames, where they leap up and down as if the tongues of fire were powerless to harm them. When they emerge again they are quite unscathed, because, as they say, they have a "Juju medicine which stays the power of fire."¹ On one occasion a stranger not thus protected leapt inside, suspecting that some trick was employed, and was dragged out badly hurt. We had hoped to witness the next fire play, but this was prevented by our departure from the District.

At Eyo Abassi Town a similar ceremony is reported to

¹ Some Ibo "doctors" are credited with the same power.

be performed. The last time on which it was carried out is said to have been about three years ago. Those who "know the fire play" claim also to have the power of passing unharmed over glowing embers. It is noteworthy that these fire plays are generally given, as with us of old, at about the time of the summer solstice.

In this part of the world the art of making flame from fire-sticks seems unknown. The only way of obtaining it in olden days is said to have been to strike a matchet upon stone until sparks fell upon a little heap of dry grass or leaves piled near by for the purpose.

Ibibio people are naturally nervous about sleeping with a fire burning in their houses, because of the inflammable nature of the buildings. Before going to rest, therefore, they usually rake it out and cover up a small portion of the embers with dried spadices from which the palm-nuts have been plucked, since these form slow-burning fuel. Little bundles of firewood are always kept ready to rekindle the flame on the morrow.

When a new house has been built, the owners carry thither the "seeds of fire" from their former dwelling; for they think that by so doing they not only bring a home-like feeling into the new quarters, but that the presence of fire from the old hearth will enable them to live peacefully within the new walls. The brand must be carried in the hands of a woman who has borne many children but is now too aged to bear more. Contrary to the custom of many tribes, the fires must not be allowed to die down in the compound of a dead chief until the last of his funeral rites is ended. This is said to be another expedient for "keeping the ghost-house warm." The following is the story of the coming of fire:

HOW FIRE CAME TO THE MANGROVE LANDS.

(Told by Udaw Owudumo of Ikot Atako.)

"In old old times, part of our country possessed fire; but the greater part had none. Those who sought to buy it had to go on a long journey, leading with them a cow in

payment for a few live coals, which were given them in the hollow of a plantain stem, together with a little faggot of dry chips to feed the flame until their town was reached. Even at so high a price, fire was only sold on condition that it should be kept for the purchaser's own use and not the smallest ember given to any of the townsfolk.

"One day a certain family set forth to the 'fire land,' leading a cow as the price of what they sought. Soon after crossing the border of that country they saw a tall palm tree from which mimbo was being made. Now, after the first flow of the sap is over, it is usual to light a little fire amid the great leaves at the top of the tree, so that the heat may draw up the sweet musk-like juice. As they went by one of their company stayed them, saying: 'Wait a bit.'

"Then very softly he crept up the palm, while his friends kept guard below. When the top was reached, he stood up and looked round over all the country-side, to see if any of the inhabitants were coming. None was in sight, so he said: 'It is well. Perhaps we may have free fire this day!' Then he took a piece of bark, in it laid the 'seeds of fire' from the mimbo tree, carried this down with all care, and gave it to his friends, saying: 'Here is fire for you.'

"They took it and went back to their town glad of heart. When they reached home, they ran in among all the people showing what they bore and crying: 'Look at the fire which we bring! Free it is, for we have paid nothing for it. In proof behold our cow!'

"The townsfolk asked: 'How did you get this thing?' To which they answered: 'We saw it at the top of a mimbo palm. When we found it, the owner was not there. So we took it and bore it away without payment.'

"On hearing this all the people rejoiced. Singing and dancing they went forth to the bush seeking dry wood with which to make a fire so great that all the townsfolk might have a share. While this was being done, one of the men stood forth and cried: 'Let us choose a guard to set over this new treasure!'

"To this counsel all agreed, and when each had taken a brand to his home, making fire upon the hearth that it might never more grow cold, the rest was borne in solemn

procession to the 'Egbo-shed.' Over it a guard was set and a priest chosen that he might watch it well so that it should never die.

"From that day all men can warm themselves in the glow of their own hearths, while their wives cook chop and enjoy it; for fire dwells among us and we need no longer seek it in a far country and at a great price."

Probably an echo of this legendary origin is to be found in the rites of the Juju Ibokk Ukpenn, *i.e.* the Soul's Medicine, to which recourse is had when a man lies sick.

A fire is made a little to the side of the shrine but not far distant, and on this, while reciting prayers for the recovery of the sufferer, the priest slowly sprinkles palm-wine. Afterwards, it is said, the man for whose sake the rite has been performed usually recovers.

Often when passing along bush path or village street we met an aged crone or young boy carrying a section of hollowed-out plantain stem, from which rises a thin film of blue smoke. On head or in hand, a little faggot may usually be seen ready for use in rekindling. One night, at Ikotobo, we came upon such a fire-bearer, who might have stood for the personification of the African Prometheus in the old Ekoi story, newly alighted upon earth, with his gift of fire from Heaven.¹

Chief Inaw of Ikotobo, a man more deeply versed than most others of his race in tribal traditions, gave the following account of the sun and moon:

"The sun is a wicked god. In olden times, once a year, when he rose high in the sky, all the men of our people used to go out with matchets, making blood flow in streams to appease his wrath and refresh him. Then, when he sank low in the heavens, they thought that he was satisfied, and, since the sky grew red, that he was renewing his power by bathing in a bath of blood. Quieted by this belief, the earth-folk thought that danger was over for the time and that they also might bathe and rest."

This tradition of sun-worship and sun-sacrifice is evidently very ancient, and recalls the old Aztec sacrifices, when blood

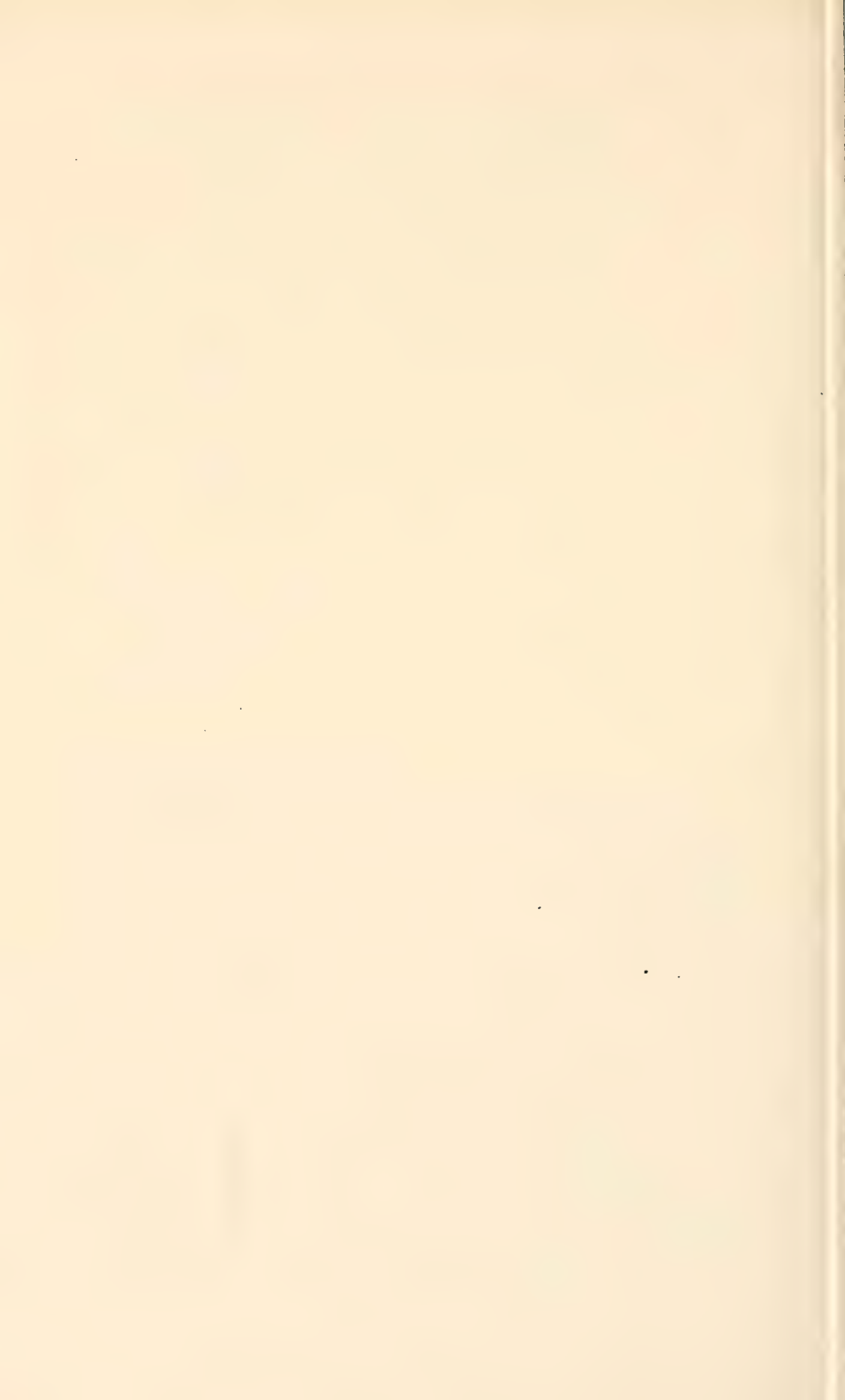
¹ *In the Shadow of the Bush*, p. 370.



AN IJBIO BOY CARRYING FIRE IN A HOLLOWED
PLANTAIN STEM.



YORUBA TRADERS.



was shed in floods and bleeding hearts, torn from living victims, were held up to renew the power of the deity.

“The moon, on the other hand, is good and gentle because she is a woman, and to her women pray that they may become fruitful. When she comes from the East we call her ‘The Mother.’ When, on the contrary, this great light appears in the West, we think that he is a man and therefore name him ‘The Father.’ Old folks have noticed that when he appears from this direction he is also always followed by a big star which we call his ‘best-loved wife.’ Their children are down below, so one cannot see these.

“Again, when at dawn the full moon sinks towards the bush, we say that she is feminine and is following her husband the sun. All the small stars are the children of the sun and moon.”

In this belief, surely, an echo of the *ἱερὸς γάμος*, described in the Rig Veda, may be found. In Slavonic legends, too, sun and moon are married each year, parting in winter to meet again at the coming of spring. In Greek story Hera, the patroness of all marriage, invoked by women in labour, was originally a moon-goddess and her mystic nuptials with the sky-god, Zeus, took place in early spring.

τοῖσι δ' ὑπὸ χθὼν δῖα φύεν νεοθηλέα ποίην,
λωτόν θ' ἐρσήεντα ἰδὲ κρόκον ἥδ' ὑάκινθον
πυκνὸν καὶ μαλακόν, ὃς ἀπὸ χθονὸς ὑψόος' ἔεργε.
τῷ ἐνὶ λεξάσθην, ἐπὶ δὲ νεφέλῃν ἔσσαντο
καλὴν χρυσείην.¹

And under them

The sacred Earth put forth fresh-springing grass,
The lotus dew-besprengt; the yellow crocus
And hyacinth, close-furled and soft, which held them
On high above the ground. Hereon to sleep they laid them,
While over them they spread a lovely golden cloud,
From which fell glistening raindrops.

When full moon shines splendid plays are given, “because in the bright moonbeams people feel enjoyment very much. Many therefore, choose this time for sacrificing to their Jujū.”

¹ *Iliad*, xiv. 347.

Another chief, after confirming all that Inaw had said, added: "When the sun goes down, it sinks into the big water. We are lost in wonder and cannot tell how it gets round to rise in the East! In spite of its brightness I do not think that it is very large, certainly not as large as the table at which we are sitting. I should judge it to be about the size of a big plate."

In certain parts of the country people used to sacrifice to the moon, which they called "The White Cock-hen." They thought that it was wont to come down to enjoy the sacrifices. At Calabar, in olden days, it was also said that the moon came down to walk about and enjoy things when all the earth-folk were sleeping.

When the moon gets later and later in rising, men say that he is a man and that

<i>Offiong</i>	<i>esin</i>	<i>udia</i>	<i>anwan</i>	<i>ima</i>
Moon	refuses	chop (of)	wife	loved.

Should you wish to know the age of the waxing moon, Ibibio say that you have only to look through a white silk handkerchief and can tell the number of days since new moon by counting the thin crescents to be seen in this way.

A prayer offered to the new moon is much like that recorded among the Ekoi and runs: "O moon, new, protect me! Let not evil influence, ghost or devil, harm me so long as you shine in the sky."

The four or eight days' week (Urua) prevails over all Ibibio land. Four weeks make a month, and twelve months a year of two seasons, dry and rainy. January is called "Offiong 'Nda Eyo," *i.e.* First Moon of Season. February is named "Offiong Udiana," March "Offiong Eyo." April to September are called "Akpa Offiong Ukwa," *i.e.* Moons of the Rainy Season. October to December are known as "Akpatre Isua," *i.e.* Last Part of the Year. Each succeeding month is called the "Brother" of the previous one.

Not many planets or stars are given particular names. The word for star itself, 'Ntan-ta-Offiong," means "Sand of the Moon." Among those best known are:

Angwa Obo. Jupiter. (Whenever this luminary rises, an Egbo play called by the same name is given.)

<i>Nwan</i>	<i>Ima</i>	<i>Ntan-ta-Offiong.</i>	Venus.
Wife	loved	star.	

<i>Etaw</i>	<i>Iyakk</i>	<i>Ita.</i>	Belt of Orion.
Stick	(of) fishes	three.	

<i>Unen</i>	<i>Eka</i>	<i>Nditaw.</i>	Aldebaran.
Fowl	mother	(of) chicks (or children).	

<i>'Ntan-ta-Offiong</i>	<i>Usere.</i>	The Morning Star.
Star	(of) morning.	

Here, as in many parts of the world, the coming of a comet is looked upon as foretelling the death of a great man. In Calabar a ring round the moon, and among the Eket a rainbow, Oddokk Abassi, "The Horn of God," are regarded as of like portent. In other parts the latter is called Akpara and thought to be sent by Abassi to stop the rain.

As has been previously mentioned,¹ Obumo, the Thunderer, is by many Ibibio identified with Abassi, the Supreme God and Maker of Heaven and Earth. Others, however, think that lightning, variously called Obbuma, Aduma, Amuma, Amoma, or Eruma, and thunder, termed onomatopoeically Ammarannmaran, or Nkeppkepp, are messengers of Abassi, sometimes sent to give warning of approaching rain, at others to kill witches or "bad" trees. Rain ordinarily comes from Abassi, but there are many "doctors" who can make it come or cease at their will.

¹ *Vide* Chapter I.

CHAPTER XIX

ORONN—EKET MAIN ROAD

(I) ORONN TO IKOTOBO

THE easiest way of reaching Eket District is, after landing at Calabar, to proceed by launch or canoe to the little port of Idua Oronn on the Cross River. This is a trading centre of some importance, since it boasts four European factories as well as several native stores, and can indeed be reached direct from Liverpool by cargo boats. After the newly-discovered creeks had been cleared of snags and many of the smaller roads cleaned and widened, the merchants of Oronn stated that trade grew by leaps and bounds till, in the month of May, it had risen to about three times that of Calabar.

The place has other interests beside commercial ones. Near by lives a Juju-man of sinister and far-reaching reputation, whose dwelling is carefully shunned at night-fall by all honest citizens. Certain it is that this terrible individual has amassed considerable wealth by means which would ill bear inquiry.

A Christian chief of our acquaintance, when questioned by one of the local traders as to the practical nature of his reliance on the power of Christianity to protect him from evil influences such as Witchcraft or Juju, answered firmly: "With a Bible in my hand, I would go fearlessly before every Juju shrine, or enter into the house of any Witch-doctor, knowing that such had no longer power to harm me, save only"—this was spoken after considerable hesitation and embarrassment, and in a very small voice—"that of the one man of this town whose evil power is

so strong that I would not dare enter his door at night-time, even under the protection of the 'Word of God.'"

This Juju priest, as is the case with most of his class, is reported to cherish bitter enmity against Government, which indeed is only natural, when one thinks how many prospective victims have been snatched from the power of such men by White Rule. To him it is that the fate of our Yoruba steward was ascribed by all the people round, as well as the torture and death of many, needed for his unholy rites.

Within the bush, some few miles from the town, lies a sacred crocodile swamp. Not long ago a young trader was bicycling along one of the paths when he fell over an obstacle placed across the way. To his horror he found that this was the body of a woman, with cleft skull, laid out as if for sacrifice. Round the corpse were set Juju pots of various shapes and sizes, so that there seemed but little doubt that the poor woman had been made the victim of some cult which still makes human sacrifices whenever there is a chance that such cruel rites may escape the notice of Government. Until a very few years ago both men and women were offered up to the principal Jujus of each town at the time of the new yam planting, at the beginning of the fishing season, at the harvest festival, and on the death of any great chief. Hundreds must have perished yearly from such causes; and though there is great reason to believe that, at present, no more can be said than that the number has now dropped to scores or maybe dozens, yet there is cause to hope that, by means of constant vigilance, such horrors will, in time, be utterly stamped out.

The hero of the accident described above had a brief but adventurous career on the West Coast. A few months later, according to the account given us, he was riding with some companions past the Juju-shed of a small town in the neighbourhood. On a post near the door a smoke-blackened skull was laid, and this one of his companions dared the young trader to seize and ride off with. Instantly the latter sprang from his bicycle, caught up the grim trophy, and rode away at topmost speed. Not a moment too soon; for, before the white men had got clear

of the village, its inhabitants are said to have poured out, matchet in hand, to give chase, and only by considerable exertion did the visitors escape the consequences of so rash an act.

Some time afterwards the stolen skull disappeared from the factory whither it had been carried, and the incident seemed closed. One day, however, as the white man went up the stairs leading to the verandah, followed by a boy bearing a shot-gun, the charge went off and entered his thigh. Only the kindest attention from all at Oronn saved him from bleeding to death, and the result was that, after several weeks in hospital at Calabar, he had to be invalided home. There was not the slightest circumstance to point to anything other than accident; but nothing would convince the natives that the misfortune was not caused by the vengeance of the outraged Juju.

Not far from Idua Oronn is the sacred grove of Abang 'Ndak, whence no branch might be cut, or leaf plucked, on penalty of death. This was a place of refuge for escaped slaves and of sanctuary for those guilty of manslaughter.

From the port starts the principal road of the District, fringed, for most of its length, by palm trees but otherwise almost unshaded. To right and left lie open, sun-soaked farms, alternating with stretches of "new bush," left to lie fallow for three years, after which they in turn are brought under cultivation. The story of the making of the Oronn—Eket road was thus told by Chief Henshaw:

"About 1899, Government first made an attempt to pass from Oronn to Eket. Captain Ross-Brown was in charge, but the Oronn people gave us false guides, who led us round and round by Eyo Abassi and Ekim, thence to Obodu and Obumm. Through swamp after swamp we passed, sometimes clambering over fallen tree trunks, on which we had to balance ourselves like monkeys amid the branches, but more often wading and swimming, through water up to the lips and so cold that it numbed our limbs. Then the guide said that he could lead us no farther, and, after two nights spent on the way, we arrived back in Idua Oronn.

"Next year another route was tried, under Mr. F. S.



“IMAGE” OF THE AKPAMBE CULT, VERY POWERFUL IN THE
ORONN REGION.



“IMAGE” WITH SKULL.



James,¹ the present Administrator of Lagos Colony. This time we went with a small escort from Itak to Nsia, hoping thus to reach Ikotobo and thence Eket. The chiefs of the last friendly town declared, however, that a little farther on people were lining the way, ready to fight us ; so they refused to give a guide. We, therefore, followed a straight road which seemed to lead in the right direction.

“ Before us in the bush sounded the blowing of horns, gathering the people together to oppose our passage. We would have pressed forward, but the head priest came and so earnestly begged us not to do so, lest Government should blame him for anything that might befall us, that we had to go back.

“ By next year, White Rule had grown in power in this part of the world. Mr. A. C. Douglas was District Commissioner at Eket, where the African Association had built a factory which then could only be reached by way of the Kwa Ibo River.

“ Major Winn Sampson was Commissioner in Calabar at the time, and Oronn was under him ; so he was anxious to open the road between this part and Eket town, since this would be good for trade. One afternoon, therefore, he summoned Chief Richard Henshaw and myself to discuss plans with him, and we advised waiting a little, until we could make friends with the chiefs and powerful people along the route and collect information from them. At once he agreed and gave us leave to see what could be done in the matter, so we sent for Chief Edehi 'Nion of Etebio and Chief Ekong 'Nyang of 'Ntara Inyang. When these came we treated them kindly, for they were powerful men who controlled many neighbouring towns beside their own. They put before us that they understood Government always brought war upon a country when it had once been allowed to pass through ; but we told them we only came in friendliness and to open up the land to trade. So they agreed that we might come to their town. A day was fixed for making a new start ; they provided guides and we set out from Oronn by way of Eyo Abassi to Ekim Obodu, Oroko and Etebio.

¹ Now Sir Frederick James, Colonial Secretary of the Straits Settlements.

“ The road was very bad, mostly swamps and thick bush ; but the Chief of Etebio received us very well. There we saw sacrifice after sacrifice offered before Juju shrines. Some of these were human victims, slain in the market-place and fastened to poles twenty feet high. The body was wrapped round like a bundle, by means of 'Nyang Ukot, the flat kind of tie-tie which comes from the trunk of the mimbo palm.¹ These offerings were lashed on high, about the middle of the pole.

“ Through the town we passed, to the place where the chief was. He promised to help us, and, in the evening, sent to call together head men from all the country-side. When they arrived, Major Winn Sampson explained the reason of our visit, and the chief advised that the best place from which to start would be 'Ntara Inyang. Thither we therefore went, and stayed a little while, talking to the principal people, who all seemed pleased and friendly. Next day more chiefs came in from far-off towns, to join in the discussion. These would hardly let us speak, but declared over and over again that they knew we were coming to bring war and take their land. When we denied this, they brought Juju stones, about fifteen inches square, thin and flat, and asked Major Winn Sampson to take oath upon these. He said he was quite ready to swear that Government would not trouble the people so long as they did no harm. When Richard Henshaw was asked to take oath they said : ‘ You and Daniel are cousins, therefore if either of you injure us by breaking oath, the Juju must kill both.’

“ As the time was already drawing towards evening, we stayed there for the night, and next day set out again in the direction of Eket. Then the people brought out Juju horns made of elephants tusks, which gave forth a strange booming sound. These they played before us through the bush, that all the towns might know we came in peace. When such horns are blown, people know that the newcomers are under the protection of powerful chiefs and therefore may not be harmed.

“ In this way we came through safely, and the District Commissioner, Mr. Douglas, was very pleased to see us at

¹ Piassava fibre.

Eket at last. After a day or two spent in his station, we went back together with him, the Agent of the African Association, and Edogho Eket, head chief of the town. With us we took many dashes bought at the factory, such as cloth, tobacco, and other fine things. Straight to Etebio we went, and there held a big meeting. At this one of the chiefs got up and said that the District Commissioner of Calabar had taken oath not to bring war, but perhaps the District Commissioner of Eket, who had not sworn any such thing, might do this. He added that we must therefore take oath again, and this time on the Blood Juju.

“ The three white men, with Edogho Eket and five of the principal chiefs, sat together. A bowl of mimbo was brought, with a glass for each, and one over. Into the latter every man had to let fall a few drops of blood, from a cut made in the back of the hand by the wrist. When all had contributed, a little mimbo was poured in and the glass carefully shaken so as to mix the contents. These were then shared out into the glasses of the five principal people ; more mimbo was added and the mixture drunk off.

“ After this rite a big dash was given, while much palm-wine was drunk amid great rejoicing. In the evening a splendid play was performed, and the white visitors also joined in the dance to show that they were glad and friendly.

“ This was the way in which the Oronn—Eket road was opened. Before the first mails were sent along it old newspapers were folded and put in a bag to look like the proper mail. At the bottom was just one letter to the District Commissioner, Eket, in order to find out if the road was safe and clear. To the relief of all, the runner passed through unharmed. Again and again the experiment was tried and always with success. So the real mails were sent at last. After a while it was found that the road was a very long one, so the same year we started a new route *via* Ikotobo.

“ People were friendly now, and we got Chief Awkonnor and Akpan Umana, cousins of the head chief, to arrange for us to pass through his town. He agreed, as did all others along the proposed route ; so all went well with the road till it was carried beyond Ikotobo. Then Akap Idu, chief of Afaha Ubium, whose territory we had reached, came out

with his whole town to stop us. The Chief of Ikotobo said that without the permission of these people we could not go on. We tried, therefore, to persuade them to come in and discuss the matter ; but instead of this, the principal men came, one by one, to try to persuade the Ikotobo chiefs to let them kill us. These, however, refused, saying that, if such a thing happened in their town, Government would hold them responsible.

" The friendly chiefs begged us not to go any farther, since our enemies were waiting to kill us in the bush beside the path. As we were determined, in this case, to push back to Oronn, they offered to go with us ; and walked, each arm-in-arm with one of us, until we had passed the ambuscade and reached Oronn in safety.

" Next we tried a new way by Eshi's beach on the Ubium River ; but it was not satisfactory, and, in the end, Government had to send an expedition to force the people of Afaha Ubium to let the road be made through their land.

" The following year, when Mr. Whitehouse was District Commissioner of Calabar, he came to try if a still shorter way could not be found. Then we learnt that the one first taken by Captain Ross-Brown was the best of all ; so we passed along this from town to town, making a straight road—and that is the one which all the people use to-day."

I should like here to mention the excellent route sketches which were made by Captain Ross-Brown and Mr. A. C. Douglas under most difficult conditions.

Eight miles beyond Idua Oronn lies Oyubia, the head chief of which, Enyenihi by name, tells how his grandfather woke one morning to find the town surrounded by Eket men armed with cap-guns. The invaders rushed in, slaying as they came, and, before noon, all the head chief's family, save one son, were dead ; while of the townsfolk only a remnant saved themselves by fleeing into the bush. The father of the present chief saw that it was useless to hope to recover his town by the help of these few survivors, who, moreover, had only matchets with which to face the guns of their opponents. He therefore had recourse to a stratagem, which was thus related :

" The bush-path by which the enemy was most likely to

advance led down the slope of a little hill. At the base of this the chief dug a pit so deep that his people thought he was going to make a hole right through the earth! Into the bottom he drove sharp stakes which stood out a foot or more above the floor. Then, over the surface, leaves and branches were strewn, until the trap was quite hidden.

"Now among the slaves was a man with a skin disease so terrible that it had eaten away the greater part of his face. Him the chief dressed in hideous fashion, with horned head-piece and robe covered with strange Juju symbols. In each hand a long matchet was set, and he was then placed in a clump of bushes just at the top of the hill.

"When the enemy neared the hiding-place, the man kept quite still until all had passed by. Then, obeying the instructions of the chief, he sprang forth, uttering blood-curdling cries. The Eket, looking up, saw him standing at the summit, and called: 'The devil has come to fight to-day! Let us flee!' Terror seized them, and they rushed down the slope, to fall into the trap at its foot.

"So cunningly prepared was the gin that not one escaped. All lay writhing and moaning in the pit, while the Oyubians gathered round its edge. Then the victorious chief promised that, if they would give up their guns and two men who would teach him the use of these, he would spare their lives."

The unfortunate victims had no choice but to obey, and that is the way in which the people of Oyubia became possessed of guns and learnt how to use them. Afterwards the wretched Eket were shot with their own weapons, because these had slain the Oyubians. Only the two men drawn up out of the pit were saved, and these became slaves of the chief's house.

Near where the fight took place grows a huge cotton tree, and several others, hardly less splendid, protect the town. Two of these stand sentry-like, before and behind the "war-shed," a spot which, for us, will always have a rather tragic interest.

Not long after my arrival, chance brought to light a state of affairs which necessitated immediate action. As a

result several native officials were imprisoned, whereon their friends determined to leave no stone unturned to bring about my removal. They therefore went through the District, calling together the chiefs, and saying that, when among the Ekoi, I had wantonly shot men with my own hand, and was now about to bring "war" upon the Ibibio, burn their towns, and slay every man, woman, and child who should fall into my power. The only way, so they urged, for the people to save themselves, was to kill me before I had time to destroy them.

The disaffected elements knew quite well that these simple bush-folk, obedient to authority under ordinary circumstances, when driven over the border-line by terror "see red," and their one idea is to slay.

According to statements of many chiefs, the malcontents summoned the head men of twenty-seven Oron towns to assemble in the "war-shed" of Oyubia in order to discuss plans for doing away with us. The building takes its name from the fact that it is never used save to arrange "war palavers," and the last occasion on which such a meeting had been held was before the Expedition of 1902.

It happened that a clerk was to be tried in the local Court-house, and, according to subsequent statements, it was settled that my pronouncing judgment upon him should be the signal for our murder. So many people came down for the trial that not only was there hardly breathing room within the building, but the crowd surged, six to eight deep, as close as possible to the breast-high mud-and-wattle walls. So eager were those at the back to miss no word of the proceedings, that they pressed upon the front rows so heavily that these, in turn, were forced forward against the wall. The stout posts supporting the left side of the roof cracked beneath the strain, and, had not warning shouts been raised, half the roof, together with the heavy pillars, would have fallen upon and injured the packed mass of humanity within. Several of those concerned have since confessed that only the non-appearance of a witness, to await whose testimony judgment was deferred, saved our lives. Proceedings were adjourned, and we left Court in ignorance of the fate so narrowly escaped, though conscious

of something in the atmosphere much like the leashed electricity before the outburst of the sudden tornadoes which, in this part of the world, often break without warning and carry all before them.

Since the first plot came to nothing, another meeting was held in the "war-shed" to arrange further methods. To this second gathering came Chief Eyo 'Ndemm 'Nyenn of Adukum, to whom we shall ever owe a debt of gratitude; for he alone of the delegates present rose in his place and said that he would have no part in the murder of a man against whom no harm had been proved. but who had only punished those who had committed crimes and oppressed the people. "If there is proof that the Commissioner killed men among the Ekoi or intends to bring war against us," he asked, "why do you not tell Chief Henshaw, the Native Political Agent, who would then advise you how to set to work so that the 'Big Consul' at Calabar may look into the affair." To this Enyenihi replied: "We have been told that Chief Henshaw must learn nothing about the matter."

On hearing this, 'Ndemm 'Nyenn left the building, and his departure threw the remaining chiefs into a state of grave anxiety. The malcontents had assured them that the whole District had agreed to the plot, and that there was therefore little danger for those concerned, since, if every town was equally guilty, terror would keep the inhabitants from allowing the truth to leak out. It would be easy, they said, to waylay us on some bush-path and bury us where our bodies would never be found.

Lest it seems incredible that any one could have been persuaded that a disappearance would be so easily hushed up, let me quote a paragraph written by one of my kind critics in the *African Mail* under date April 25, 1913:

"The man who scoffs at the Ghost charm, battered and torn in its cleft stick, will never get to the bottom of the Secret Society case, when a man's dead body is found on his own verandah and even his wives and concubines pretend to know nothing about it—who he was, where he came from, and how he got there."

The fact that 'Ndemm 'Nyenn refused to be any party to

the plot disconcerted the plans of the others. Had they known that the whole tribe of Ubium Ibibio had also refused to be drawn in, they would have hesitated still more. As it was, the first defection caused considerable delay and thus saved our lives.

Meanwhile the ringleader of the malcontents is stated to have approached one who had been placed in custody for a minor offence, and, never doubting the latter's complicity, had asked whether he could recommend any one who was a sufficiently good shot to be trusted to hide in the bush at the wayside and shoot us as we rode by. The man, according to his statement, answered :

“ I will have nothing to do with such a plan. It is true that the District Commissioner punished me for the wrong I did, but he has not tried to touch my life and neither will I take his.”

This man was the son of the principal Chief of Oduko, the town which lies under the shadow of the great Ebiri-bong tree. Perhaps something of the grandeur and beauty from the worship of so noble a symbol of beneficent nature forces had unconscious influence on his character ; for the fault for which he had been imprisoned was one hardly considered wrong from the native point of view. I had never had an opportunity of showing him kindness ; he was still under arrest, and might well have harboured a feeling of resentment, and, although taking no active part against us, have been willing to let us face our fate as best we might. Instead of this, he braved the risk of added punishment by persuading a man to fetch his wife, whom he sent at once to Chief Henshaw, bidding her repeat not only the proposal made to himself but also give warning of the ominous meeting in the “ war-shed.”

No sooner did Chief Henshaw learn of the danger which threatened us on account of the terror and excitement induced by the false statements than he set out to try to save our lives at the risk of his own. He, in turn, summoned a meeting of Oronn chiefs, and at length, by taking oaths on the great Juju 'Mbiam, the which there is no revoking, induced them to believe that, so far from my having harmed a single Ekoi, the whole race was at

the moment petitioning for my return, while no least thought of injury was intended against the Ibibio. The chiefs expressed themselves convinced, but were uneasy as to the consequences of having been led into the plot.

The time of the year was one in which excitement runs unusually high, for it was the season of new yam planting, during which, in olden days, human sacrifices were always offered to ensure prosperity to the crops.

We learned that the feast of Abassi Isua (the God of the Year) was shortly to be held at Oyubia. For this festival each clan makes a little "god" of grass and leaves about two and a half feet high. Upon its head a small bowl is placed hat-wise, and an egg laid in the centre. Each man and boy brings a thin stick, fresh cut that morning and sharply pointed, which he drives into the image, until this has a porcupine-like appearance.

By a strange coincidence the prayer offered to Abassi Isua on this occasion might stand for an Ibibio translation of that passage in the *Elegies* of Tibullus describing a Nature Festival of his day, save only that the word "leopard" must be substituted for wolves:

"Gods of our sires, we cleanse the farms, we cleanse the farming folk. Do ye outside our boundaries drive all evil things. Let not our sown fields mock the reaping with defaulting blade. Let not our slow lambs fear the swifter wolves."¹

The Ibibio version runs:

<i>Abassi</i>	<i>mete</i>	<i>nyinn</i>	<i>nyinn</i>	<i>imanam</i>	<i>edisana</i>	<i>inwan,</i>	<i>nyinn</i>
Gods	fathers	our	we	make	clean	farms	we
<i>imanam</i>	<i>edisana</i>	<i>mowo</i>	<i>inwan.</i>	<i>Kedem</i>	<i>adana</i>	<i>nyinn</i>	
make	clean	folk	farm.	Outside	boundaries	our	
<i>imosio</i>	<i>idiok</i>	<i>nkpaw.</i>	<i>Kuyak</i>	<i>mfri</i>	<i>nyinn</i>	<i>akabade</i>	<i>ke</i>
drive	evil	things.	Let not	crops	our	fail	at
<i>kiniidokde.</i>	<i>Kuyak</i>	<i>ekkpe</i>	<i>anam</i>	<i>ufene</i>	<i>nyinn.</i>		
harvest.	Let not	leopards	harm	herds	our.		

For this feast the Oronn flock in their thousands to

¹ *Catullus, Tibullus, and Pervigilium Veneris* Translated by F. W. Cornish, J. P. Postgate, J. W. Mackail. The Loeb Classical Library, Heinemann.

Oyubia. Much *tombo*, *i.e.* palm-wine, is drunk, and ritual dances are given in which the firing of guns and brandishing of sharp-edged matchets play a great part. A large number of wounds, and even deaths, often result.

This year the people of the towns concerned in the plot were in a state of nervous tension as to the consequences of their attitude, and it was necessary to calm them without loss of time, lest a single spark might, as often before, give rise to a far-reaching conflagration. It seemed well, therefore, to meet them face to face with as little delay as possible and, once for all, put an end to their fears. My wife and her sister begged to accompany me on the motor bicycle which had only arrived a short time before, and which alone made possible a more or less adequate supervision of the District, by rapid transit at least along the main thoroughfare.

After it had been calculated that most of the celebrants would have arrived, so that the road should no longer be overcrowded by people flocking to the festival, we set forth, the sidecar of the bicycle holding my two companions at a very tight fit.

That ride remains in our memories as an interesting and somewhat exciting experience. For once the hum of the motor, usually allowed to sound its loudest in order to give warning of our approach, was silenced. We left the main road and turned into a deserted side path, the ground of which had never before been pressed by so modern a conveyance, and were in the midst of the crowd before the first rumour of our coming could reach to scatter them.

It was only a few weeks since my arrival in the District, and my knowledge of Ibibio was consequently almost nil; but, by pre-arrangement, Chief Daniel Henshaw was already there, and in his capable translation my little speech certainly lost nothing. The effect of the assurance, that I understood how they had been led to believe that only my death could save their own lives and those of their women and children, seemed magical. When asked not to believe the falsehoods which they had been told, but to judge for themselves from my actions whether or no I was friendlily disposed, old chiefs came up weeping, to

beg pardon for having been led away, and to ask that they and their people might not be punished for joining in the plot against us. A revulsion of feeling set in, and we afterwards felt as safe among the Oronn as we used to do amid our own Ekoi.

A little beyond Oyubia lies a steep piece of road which the motor bicycle usually finds difficulty in climbing. Often it breaks down about half-way up and has to be pushed to the top. When the conspirators found that their other attempts had failed—through no fault of theirs, for they showed really remarkable versatility in planning ways of ridding themselves of us—they sent round and got together a band of twelve men, sworn on the Ibeno Juju Ukpa to murder me; but, this time, owing, I think, to the influence of a man dragged in somewhat against his will, it was arranged “not to harm the white ladies, because they were so kind”—unless it was found impossible to kill me without bringing about their deaths also.

The twelve were said to have met beneath a Juju tree in a celebrated Sacred Grove near Jamestown, and planned to wait in the bush by the roadside near the little hill where the motor usually slowed down. It happened to be late in May, and they knew that we were going to Ikotobo for the Empire Day celebrations on the 24th. Strangely enough, on this occasion, the bicycle took the hill like a bird. We whizzed by the ambush in glorious style, and the would-be assassins, unable to get a safe shot, and fearing the consequences of failure, refrained from firing.¹

Of the many attempts made to poison us it would be too tedious to tell. One chief and a clerk, perhaps less wily than the others, were sentenced each to five years' penal servitude; while, just before leaving the District, a man in whom we had complete trust was found in possession of a calabash the contents of which might have rivalled the brew of Macbeth's witches, and which he was accused of having intended to administer at the last moment, so that we might die on the way home. From all appearances no decomposed mackerel of the Borgias could have been

¹ Captain Farmar Cotgrave, who was in charge of Eket in 1922, was shot in his office by one of his police.

more efficacious. Indeed one of the senior medical officers who chanced to see it stated that such a mixture, administered in the food of Europeans, could not but have had fatal effects.

It is perhaps worth remarking that two Commissioners of neighbouring Districts are said to have almost died from poison given to them. The health of one is reported to be permanently ruined, while the other suffered severely for a long period.

On several occasions we were warned that fowls brought as "dashes" had been poisoned with the idea of killing us. On learning this, the late Dr. Foran, medical officer for the District, instituted inquiries in order to discover whether it was possible for poison to be administered to a fowl in such a manner that the bird itself would not die for a day or two, but, if killed and eaten meanwhile, would cause the death of those who partook of it. As a result he learnt that this could be brought about by injecting poison into a vein in the leg. Birds so treated live from twenty-four to forty-eight hours, after which they die, making a strange croupy noise before death.

After learning this, we took care that all our fowls should be kept at least a week before consumption. It was probably mere coincidence; but a considerable percentage certainly happened to die after emitting weird and croupy noises.

It is perhaps worth mentioning a fact corroborated by two medical men of my acquaintance, namely, that the flesh of pigeons fed, without harm to themselves, on strychnine fruits, usually proves fatal to any who happen to partake of it.

The Anang have the reputation of providing poisons of special strength for the whole Ibibio race. They may often be seen plying their deadly wares as far south as Ikotobo. As a people the Ibibio may perhaps be considered the most adept poisoners of the whole West Coast. A favourite method of doing away with an enemy is, after drinking, as a pledge of good faith, from the proffered guest-cup, to dip the point of the third finger into the liquid in passing the vessel. A deadly poison is usually concealed

beneath the nail, which is said to be kept long for the purpose of holding a sufficient quantity to bring about the death of an enemy. Both Ibibio and Yoruba are said to use poisons which act so slowly that their effects may not show for weeks, and death not ensue for several months.

CHAPTER XX

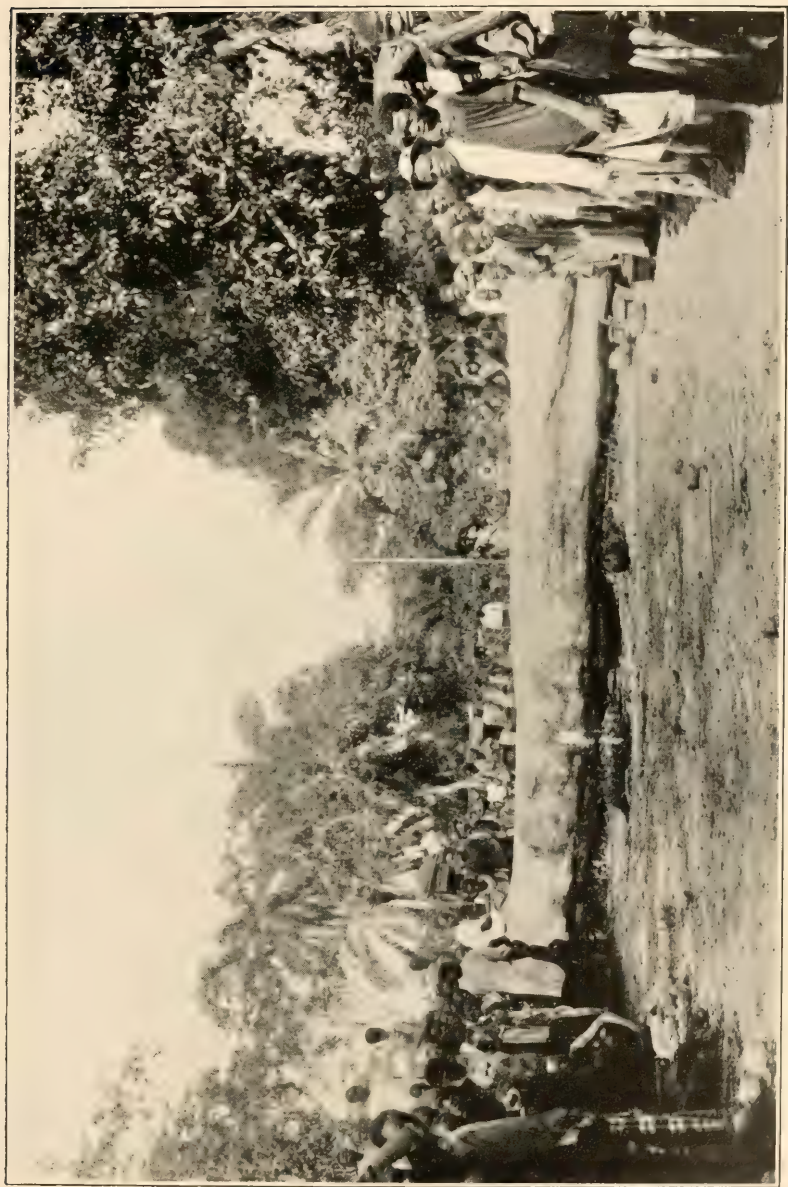
ORONN—EKET MAIN ROAD (*continued*)

(2) IKOTOBO TO EKET

IKOTOBO, the next place of importance on the main road, is the chief Ubium town. To call it 'town' at all is somewhat of a misnomer; for, like most places throughout the District, it really consists of a collection of isolated compounds, spreading out for miles on either side. It is a strange enough spot and at first sight looks a mere village. Wavering, almost invisible foot-tracks lead to the scattered homesteads, amid which strangers might wander for days without finding more than a tithe of the cunningly hidden dwellings. Yet, for any great event, the place can pour out its inhabitants by the thousand.

It is here that the sleeping-sickness camp had been instituted under the guidance of the late Dr. Patrick Foran, who had already made un hoped-for progress in treating this terrible scourge, the existence of which in the region was first reported to Government by Mr. W. W. Eakin. In spite of the difficulty of such a task, alone and unaided, Dr. Foran managed somehow to make time for research work, and had not only found a new tsetse fly and a new trypanosome, but had also discovered that the form of the disease in Eket District is different to that in any other part of the world.

It is probable that the scourge has been endemic here for so long a period that the natives have developed a power of resistance which accounts for so large a percentage of recoveries. It is locally thought to be divided into two well-marked stages, called by separate names, during each



TREE CUT DOWN IN IBIBIO MARKET-PLACE BECAUSE ONE OF THE BRANCHES FELL AND KILLED A WOMAN.

of which a totally different régime is prescribed by native practitioners.

That Dr. Foran was a man of remarkable ability is proved beyond doubt from what he did, with neither facilities nor appliances, in the few months left to him after the ground had been cleared and the camp built. Of his kindness and goodness it is difficult to speak adequately, and the news of his tragic death came with a sense of personal loss. In the sleeping-sickness camp it created utter panic, and the patients were packing up to run away when I was sent for to stop the exodus. Only by the assurance that the new medical officer would be exactly like the one who had so thoroughly won their confidence and affection, could they be induced to await the coming of his successor.

Ikotobo was also the headquarters of the late Mr. W. W. Eakin, who has done excellent educational work over many square miles of the District, and also made some remarkably accurate route sketches and interesting studies of native customs, as will be noticed from the information kindly supplied by him for incorporation in these pages.

At Ikotobo, as everywhere, cotton trees are greatly feared as the homes of powerful and generally evil spirits. Not long ago a woman was sitting in the market-place, when a branch from one of the great trees fell and struck her, so that she became unconscious and soon after died. The people drew away from the corpse in horror, whispering that death had come upon the woman because she had dared to mix with her fellows in the market without having undergone the year's purification necessary, in their eyes, after the bearing of twins. As a punishment for this disregard of the usual rites, it was thought an evil spirit had entered into the tree and struck her down. On learning of the accident the chiefs gathered together and said: "What shall we do to drive forth the evil one, lest further misfortune fall upon our people?" So they decided to cut down the tree, that its sinister occupant might be forced to find a new home. The fallen trunk still lies across the market-place, but no woman is allowed to sit upon it, "because it killed a woman."

There are other points of interest about Ikotobo. The chiefs have always faithfully kept their oath of loyalty to Government, and the town has therefore remained unscathed while others have suffered from punitive expeditions. Hence it is rich in old-time treasures, ancient weapons, and the like ; while scores of elaborately carved tusks are the property of its chiefs.

The shrine of one of the household Jujus is enriched by an heirloom, the whereabouts of which it is perhaps well not to define more clearly, lest it should attract the attention of those for whom it would have other than anthropological interest. This is a mud figure with one eye in the middle of its forehead, which is a great Juju, since, according to the statement of natives, it enables the image to see by night and day *because it can shine in the dark*.

This was found long ago by a woman of the owner's family while digging out the blue clay of the region, from which beautiful funeral jars, as well as the common household pots, are made. She saw it shining, and, picking it up, ran to show it to the head of her house, who decided that so beautiful a thing should belong to the gods. He therefore inserted it in the head of his household fetish, where it gleams to this day.

The presence of blue clay in this region is itself somewhat of a mystery, since it has been pointed out to me by my late friend, the distinguished geologist, Mr. John Parkinson, that this is totally absent from the upper regions whence the deposits of the Eket District are mostly drawn.

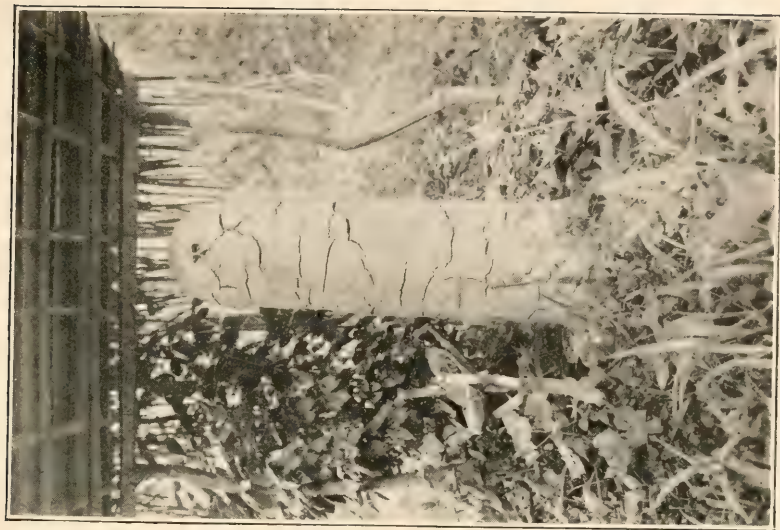
Beyond Ikotobo the main road leads past scattered farm-compounds, before many of which phallic shrines of sun-dried clay are to be seen, rising pillar-like amid the young corn and yam tendrils.

The importance of noting every scrap of evidence concerning this ancient cult, which, by sympathetic magic, was supposed to link the fruitfulness of man with that of the vegetation around him, has lately been again urged upon me by no less an authority than Dr. (now Sir) E. Wallis Budge, who, in a most interesting and illuminating letter written early in 1913, said :

" Your remarks in the earlier part of your (former)



TYPE OF IBIBIO CHIEF.



PHALLIC JUJU--TO BRING FERTILITY TO FARMS.

book about the objects worshipped are most important, and had I known of them I should have used them to clinch my argument that the reproductive organs were worshipped by the primitive Egyptians, those of both men and women. I beg of you to keep watch for more facts of this sort, and to put them on record before they disappear from the earth. I feel, with these people, that we are really getting to the bottom of religious ideas. . . .”

A tragic instance of the survival of such beliefs happened last January at Idua Oronn during the new yam planting, when a man, moved by the same mystic urging which drove the frenzied Adonis-Attis-Osiris worshippers to like acts, cut off a part of his body and flung it upon the newly hoed earth.

Small pieces of the phallus, removed during circumcision ceremonies, are collected and brought down by Yoruba traders and can be bought at any Juju market, and indeed, according to testimony from reliable sources, at most others, supposing that one keeps one's eyes open for such things. These are used as fertilising agents in farm and byre as well as by the hearth. From certain indications it would appear that portions of the phalli of warriors, cut off in the full pride of strength and power, are regarded as specially efficacious in this respect.

The long vases set in most funeral shrines for the reception of eggs, and offerings of feathers from each bird shot, or killed in sacrifice by the descendants, would also from appearance and tradition seem connected with this ancient cult.

In the Ngwumu Ufak¹ near Awa a type of votive offering is to be found which, to my knowledge at least, is not customary in other parts of the District. These are small clay models of the phallus, suspended on strings above the line of objects provided for use in the spirit world. The first wife and eldest son and daughter of the dead man fashion such symbols, called Ajak Adaw (marriage dissolved),—the size varying according to the age of the children—as a sign that they claim the deceased as the true husband or father respectively, and were not merely, in the case of the latter, the offspring of some family

¹ P. 143.

dependant, born to another man of the household, of whom the dead chief was only titular parent.

Further along at Akai, to the left of the main road, a little clearing is passed. At the back of this, behind a fragrant *Uvariastrum*, two huts are to be seen, one full of mud figures of men and animals, elaborately painted, among which a finely modelled snake is noticeable,¹ and the other sheltering the conventional "ghost offerings" of beautifully shaped bowls and jars. These are broken on the side hidden from the spectators, as is also the case with the delicately tinted pieces of fine old china, among which "Toby jugs" are often to be found, chosen out by their owner from his treasure-house many years before death, and set apart for the purpose of adorning his tomb.

Opposite to this clearing a narrow path leads to some farm dwellings, and once, near by, my wife and her sister had an unpleasant experience. A sudden call made it necessary to leave Eket for Oyubia late in the day, and, as the matter was pressing, I had ridden on, leaving them to follow more slowly with the unmounted escort. It was early in the year, and we were still ignorant that our lives were in danger through the machinations of ill-wishers.

As the little party neared a bend in the road, just before the path above mentioned, two men rushed, with uplifted matchets, round the corner towards them. A policeman and gun-boy, each bearing a rifle, ran forward, and at sight of their weapons, though these were unloaded, the assailants turned and fled, uttering cries of terror. Dusk was falling. Somewhere through the twilight a drum began to beat, and, as the party rounded the corner, an armed group was seen hurriedly disappearing down the little farm path.

Incidents of violence are constantly happening here. Twice in one fortnight we were stopped on this same main road—once by a boy who was running to the station with news that his father had just been murdered in cold blood, and another time by one who rushed up to me for protec-

¹ Among the Ibo shrines somewhat similar but far more elaborate have come to light. These seem to be erected primarily in honour of deified ancestors, but are mysteriously linked with the worship of the thunder-god Amadeonha, the earth-goddess Ale, and also the forces of fertility in farm, byre, and marriage-bed.

tion against a man who was following to kill him with a cap-gun because he had tried to prevent the latter's two sons from bathing in the spring set apart for the village drinking water !

In both cases the offender was brought to justice, but, as regards the first-mentioned crime, with great difficulty, and in spite of the utmost vigilance the cause of the murder could never be discovered. It was in all probability one of those mysterious ritual murders which have been so well described by my kind critic, G. D. H., in the *African Mail* review already mentioned, that I venture to make a further quotation :

“ This Juju power is a very terrible thing when abused, and it is very liable to abuse. Any way, it must not be despised, and it must be accepted as a fact for good or evil, and learned and controlled. It is the real power in the land. Think of it ! A man has been guilty of some offence against the unwritten law of the community. He has been tried and condemned without his knowledge by those in authority. One day he is sitting in his home at his accustomed work, or play, or meal, or rest. There is a noise outside his compound ; the Juju image with its attendants has stopped. He is called by name. He gets up, and, leaving the half-empty calabash, his women, his children, his carefully gathered household goods, his ripening crops, everything man lives for on earth, obeys the beckoning hand and goes to death. He knows he is going to his doom. He has from his youth up peeped out and seen others go just the same. He has known the reason why, and he has known the fate of the transgressor. He walks out to his death, and he knows it ; but he does not hesitate, he does not flinch ; he has no idea of resistance ; the law has for him the fascination of the snake ; his soul is struck down, just as with us our coiners and anarchists blanch at the tramp on the stair, the knock at the door, and the summons, ‘ Open in the name of the king.’ ”

Half a mile further, on the same side of the road, beneath a little shed, stands a clay figure—surely one of the most primitive possible attempts at modelling the human form divine !

A little to the right, just before Eket itself is reached, the town of Idua Eket is passed—the chief market of which was founded under the following circumstances, recounted to us by a relation of the head chief :

“ Many years ago, Iduans and Eket fought together, with the result that the former were defeated and driven into the bush. Now, when they fled, one man, 'Nkwa by name, could not follow because he was a cripple ; so, not knowing what else to do, he took refuge in a deep hole from which clay had been dug for mudding the houses. Over the top of this shelter he dragged branches and lay hidden beneath, subsisting on the small amount of food he had been able to take with him ; but still holding the little drum which alone had been saved from all his possessions. When the ' war ' was quite finished the Eket left the town, and no sooner did the lame man see their departure, from his hiding-place, than he crept out and began beating his drum to call back the Iduans. When these arrived, they thought it very wonderful that a cripple should have managed to save his life in the midst of enemies whom he could neither fight nor flee from ; so they said : ' This man has shown such wisdom that he deserves to be made a chief.' ”

“ After this had been done, the people said further : ' Let us make a market-place and call it by the name of the new chief, that all the countryside may know that he is indeed a great man.' That is the way that 'Nkwa market came to be founded.”

In the bush near by a great tree is said to have stood in olden days. This was named Abe Eket, and was an object of worship to all the neighbourhood. At the new yam harvest Iduans always went to offer sacrifice beneath its shadow, and by its power many piccans were born to the town. Within it dwelt the spirit of a leopard, while coiled around its base, at certain seasons of the year, a great python was said to have been seen. Now the tree has died, and with its fall fell also, so legend asserts, the prosperity of Idua Eket, which has now declined into a place of but little importance.

CHAPTER XXI

EKET TO IBENO

EKET Station, the headquarters of the District of the same name, stands on a gentle slope above the Kwa Ibo River, here nearly a quarter of a mile wide, filled to the brim at high tide, but edged with sandy beaches below. On one of these, in olden days, a stake was always to be seen, chosen for strength and deep-driven. Thither each year, at the time of yam-planting, people flocked from all the neighbouring hamlets. In their midst, carefully guarded, walked a woman with terror-stricken eyes and head bowed in despair. Just before the turn of the tide she was led down to the stake and firmly bound, to be drowned by the rising water, that her tears and sighs might purchase fertility for the new crops.

Though some excellent route sketches existed, the District had never been surveyed, and many parts even were as yet unvisited by Europeans. Rumour had been rife for years of mysterious water-ways, known to some few natives, but kept a carefully guarded secret from white men, by which it was said to be possible at all times of the year to pass from one side to the other. There is a charm in the study of regions as yet unmapped and the discovery of secrets hitherto hidden; so it was with a feeling of happy adventure that we set out one afternoon to start the survey, though the first part of our journey was too well known to offer the chance of exciting discovery.

The little motor launch slipped along between banks of mangrove, with its insignificant flowers and queer roots hanging from branches high overhead, to divide, just above the water, into three or four strands, each of

which pushes down into the soft mud and firmly anchors itself—another little outpost flung forth by the oncoming land.

Sometimes at low tide, bending so as to glance beneath the leafy screen, nothing was visible but arched roots of wannish white, interlacing far as the eye could see. More often, however, mud had formed up to the very edge of the barrier, solid enough to bear other growths, such as a wild date-palm, the lighter foliage of which made graceful tracery against the sombre mangrove; while innumerable flowering trees and lianes, stirred by wandering winds, gave forth breaths of fragrance.

Busy canoes passed up and down, laden with puncheons of palm-oil or other native produce; bringing to mind a quaint mistake made by two former visitors to this river on seeing such craft for the first time.

According to the story, one of the early District Commissioners stationed at Eket was aroused one afternoon from the sleep of the just by the sound of pistol-shots from the river. He seized his helmet and ran down to the landing-place in order to find out the cause of the firing. To his astonishment, he saw a canoe approaching in which were two white men, each of whom was ceaselessly loading and discharging a revolver from his side of the boat. When asked the meaning of such behaviour by the mystified Commissioner, the visitors explained that they were keeping at bay the "war canoes" of the natives, who, they feared, might otherwise have attacked them!

The official considered this story too amusing to keep to himself, and lost no time in sharing it with the Agent of the African Association, whose grounds touch those of the Station.

That night both Commissioner and new-comers were invited to dine at the "factory." In the midst of dinner, a gun was heard to go off in the darkness outside—then another and another. All present sprang to their feet with cries of "The place is attacked!" Guns and ammunition were thrust into the hands of the agitated visitors; but, by a singular chance, the cartridges were all too large for the barrels! After half an hour of excitement for the strangers

and of unholy glee for the Kru boys—stationed round the house with orders to fire in the air—the attack was declared to be driven off. Next day the new-comers went on to Calabar, where they gave a thrilling account of the dangers through which they had passed. For quite a time the story added much to the joy of that sociable little town.

As, for the first time, we floated down the river, the red sun sank, twilight fell, and the fishing canoes showed twinkling points of light as they glided along by the banks. Many superstitions obtain among these fisher-folk. In olden days, a human sacrifice was offered at the beginning of each season to ensure good fortune for the nets.

One year, the man chosen chanced to be of unusual strength. By straining every nerve he burst the bonds which held his huge limbs and found himself free once more, but with no place of refuge, since every town was closed to him, and to take to the mangrove swamps meant not life but a lingering death. In this desperate strait he decided on a daring stroke. Back to the beach he swam, where the townsfolk were merrily holding his death-feast. It chanced that he was blind of an eye, so no sooner did he near the shore than he began to call out loudly, upbraiding them in the Juju's name for daring to offer a blemished victim, and stating that the spirit had sent him back as unworthy, with the command that a better offering should be substituted.

Unquestioningly the people obeyed. A perfect victim was chosen and sacrificed, while the resourceful one-eyed deceiver lived out his life to a peaceful close.

A touch of unconscious poetry is shown in many Ibibio beliefs. They say, for instance, that sometimes, when fishing in their canoes at night, a stranger suddenly appears from out the darkness and is found sitting quietly among them. At such times they catch more fish than during any other in the year. The unknown presence is thought to be the ghost of some powerful and beneficent ancestor, who revisits thus "the glimpses of the moon" in order to bring good-fortune to his descendants.

So still was the surface, as our little motor launch slipped down the river, that, when the full moon rose above the

tree-tops, the ripple was only just enough to form a stairway for her beams.

Along the lower reaches live the Ibeno, who, according to tradition, came to this part of the world from the Andoni Flats. Near their principal town, Uben Ekang, the river broadens, and just beyond lies the mouth of Stubbs Creek, on which many thousands of pounds have been spent in an attempt to provide a water-way, navigable at all seasons, from the Kwa Ibo to the Cross River, and so to Calabar. This, with Widenham Creek, separates the uninhabited southern part of the district from the thickly-peopled and fertile main portion.

Eket people say that the country round this creek is very sacred, and that often in the night time the cries of sacrificed cows, goats, and sheep may be heard, as they pass by on their way to the spirit world; for, as with Thomas the Rhymer in the land of faery,

A' the blude that's shed on (Eket) earth
Rins thro' the springs o' that countrie

till it mingles with the waves of the Gulf of Guinea, and, further out, with those of the South Atlantic. As is to be expected amid a people who deify all great Nature forces, the sea itself is a strong Juju. Its water is mixed with most powerful "medicines," and rites and legends alike bear witness to its might.

Far up the estuary sounds the muffled thunder of the waves. Imperceptibly the river banks merge into stretches of perfect sand, so firm below the tide line as to show no footmarks, and strewn above with gleaming shells, fragments of white coral, and strange barnacles, shaped like fossil flowers. Amid these sea-treasures meander great trails of convolvulus, purple or white, and long strands of leguminosae, some of which bear flowers of vivid mauve, and others of clear, buttercup yellow.

Hither, at low tide, come Eket and Ibeno maids. Over the long firm stretches of sand they slip; then, casting off their robes, kneel at the edge of the waves to pray to the sea-goddess Uman Ibeno, to send them virile husbands. Hither also come young brides to beg for fruitfulness, while

sterile wives roll themselves in the foam, praying that their curse may be taken away.

Men, too, do not despise the aid of this West African Aphrodite, but come to plead for increased virility, or stand, with arms outstretched, begging her help in unexpected difficulty or danger.

To all those who seek her aid the goddess ordains a sacrifice of white cocks and hens, varying in number according to the riches of the petitioner ; for white are the chicks of Uman Ibeno, and the foam, which fringes her malachite waves, is as a flight of snowy birds over green bush.

Similar offerings were made at the estuaries of all large rivers in Ijaw land, to appease the Spirit of the Bar, especially when this showed signs of silting up and thus preventing the ingress of European merchant ships. On such occasions the sacrifice usually consisted of a young female slave of the lightest complexion procurable.

Practically the whole Ibeno tribe has now been converted to Christianity through the efforts of the Kwa Ibo Un denominational Mission under the leadership of Mr. Bill, who has already devoted twenty-five years of his life to the work.

Since their conversion the Ibeno show some reluctance in owning to a knowledge of heathen rites and customs. Mr. David Ekong, however,—the native minister, eldest son of the head of the ruling family, who was also chief priest of several of the principal Jujus, to which positions he would himself have succeeded in the ordinary course of events—is a man of considerable intelligence. The Mission authorities have taken unusual pains with his education, and even twice sent him to England. His superior learning, combined with the prestige of his birth, has secured for him great influence among the tribe. When therefore it was pointed out how rapidly memories of ancient rites and customs were fading, and that even the bulk of the old folklore was in danger of being forgotten, he grasped the importance of placing on record all that still remained, and offered to use his influence to induce aged members of his people to tell what they knew. It is no lessening of the thanks due to him to say that a natural reluctance to speak of what is now despised as idolatry raised an added difficulty

in finding out the true meaning of ceremonies, especially when such were connected with rites repugnant to Mission teaching. It was often, therefore, only by piecing together occasional chance admissions, scraps of folklore, and snatches of songs proper to the different cults, that the inner meaning of such could be obtained.

This was the case with the woman's Juju Okut Ibeno, whose rites are celebrated every year at the new yam harvest. Either the priest of the cult, or some man specially chosen by him, goes out into the bush before sunset on the appointed day, and weaves himself a robe of leaves and twigs which covers him from head to foot, so that no portion of his body may be seen, though he himself can watch all that passes through two small eye-holes. He spends the night in the bush, and at dawn a band of women sets forth to draw water. At the spring stands the leaf-clad figure, which bids them leave their jars and run back, as swiftly as may be, to summon the townsfolk.

No sooner do the inhabitants learn that the "leaf man" is calling, than with dancing and singing all set out for the bush. Arrived before him, in a space prepared for the purpose, they separate into two companies. The men form a circle which surrounds the image, while maids and matrons dance in an outer ring.

For three days the play lasts, during which time the whole people give themselves up to dancing, singing, feasting, and rejoicing. From some admissions, the rite seems to have been intended to increase fruitfulness, and a considerable amount of license appears to have been permitted, though of this the people are reluctant to speak.

The worship of Nature forces played a prominent part in Ibeno religion, and, among these, the spirits of vegetation were held in special reverence. The Mission Church now stands on the site of the Sacred Grove of Ainyena, in clearing which bones and skulls are said to have been discovered of many victims who had been bound to tree-trunks and left to be devoured alive by leopards and other fierce jungle folk. This grove was formerly thought so sacred that a cruel death was the doom of any woman who dared set foot within its ill-omened shades.



CHIEF COOKERY GAM OF OPOLIO AND HIS WIVES.
(Photo by A. C. Douglas.)



THE TREE AINYENA.

Though the lesser growths have fallen before the axes of converts, the presiding genius still remains. This is the great tree Efa Ekkpo (the Ghosts' dwelling-place), so called because it was thought that the spirits of all victims offered in sacrifice were drawn within, to dwell, without hope of freedom, so long as a single branch endured.

The lesser trees and bushes of the sacred grove were bound with rags and pieces of cloth ; for so the Juju ordered. Beneath the great tree, special fetish emblems were set up, and a death penalty was inflicted upon any member of the cult who should dare to reveal the least of its secrets. A man suspected of such a thing was not brought to trial, lest his fears should be aroused. Secret inquiries were set on foot by the head priest, who, when satisfied as to the culprit's guilt, merely announced, "Efa Ekkpo calls for offerings ! Let us go and make sacrifice." Arrived before the tree the usual rites were begun ; but no sooner was the victim's attention engaged by some task allotted to him than a member, chosen for the purpose, crept up from behind and, without a word of warning, felled him to the earth with a wooden club.

The body was buried at once, as near as possible to the roots of the tree, and none of the relatives ever learned of his fate. To all inquiries, the only answer given was, "He went into the bush and is lost. Maybe the trees have blocked his road so that he cannot find the way home again."

The spirit Ainyena conferred the privilege of sanctuary on the house of its head priest, and should any one accused of witchcraft or manslaughter cross this threshold he was safe from pursuit, for the whole family would rally to his defence. A like privilege was shared by the Priest of Obrowum (Lightning), the dual part of Obumo, the Thunder God, the worship of whom was also connected with that of the Sky God, Onyong.

Once a year a great festival called *Obreawong* was celebrated in honour of the combined deities. On this occasion the priest wore a white garment with a string of bells hung round his shoulders.

Only eldest sons of the Ekong family could succeed

to the priesthood of the sacred tree, the genius of which was supposed to be mysteriously linked with that of the river and of mud. Of this trilogy, to which the collective name *Ainyena* was given, the tree represented the male element and the water spirit the female, while the mud was looked upon as their common offspring. Such a belief is natural enough in a people cradled amid swamp-lands, where the fringing mangrove may be seen almost on every hand pushing long roots into the water.

On the further side of the river, opposite the sacred tree, a stake cut from *Ukon* wood may still be seen fixed in the mud. This was set as a sign that the power of the Juju extended across the water. Here, too, the bush was sacred; for within it lay the Holy Stone, to which all who suffered from dropsy went to pray for a cure. About a quarter of a mile to right and left of this, and for a still longer distance in front and to the rear, no tree might be cut or least twig broken, save at the command of the Spirit of the Stone. When such an order came, the votaries broke, each for himself, a branch, which was then carried in procession to the Sacred Stone, waving in time to the chant ordained for the occasion.

The stone itself is of no great size, but rounded like those which the Ekoi regard as emblems of the Nature-goddess Nimm. On either side a tree may be seen, and between these, in olden days, was hung a deep fringe of plaited grass or palm-leaf. The head of the house of Ekong was priest of this Juju also, but in his old age often sent his son David to carry out the rites in his stead.

The usual sacrifice was a cock, which had to be killed in such a way that the headless corpse would still flap its wings and run round; otherwise it was taken as a sign that the offering was rejected. Mr. Ekong naively owned that this was usually brought about by a trick, the secret of which had been handed down in his family. Should it miscarry by any chance, the Priest of Idiong had to be consulted and further sacrifices brought until the sign of acceptance was vouchsafed. The blood of the offering was poured over the stone, a few feathers strewn upon it, and the head laid above all.

Should a man be proved guilty of cutting down the trees in this or any other sacred grove, he was put to death, unless his family were rich enough to ransom him by payment of a very heavy fine.

The land of the Ibeno is low-lying, and their great complaint is that they have no dry place in which to bury their dead. Should they dig even a shallow grave, not more than two and a half to three feet deep, the water still soaks through, and they are obliged to push down, and weight, the frail coffins, before the earth is piled above in sufficient quantities to keep them under. It is indicative of their feelings that the fact of being forced to lay their dead in such damp resting-places touches the people more deeply than the inconvenience to themselves of being flooded out during the wet season.

Ibeno are, as previously mentioned, recent settlers in this part of the world, whither they are said to have fled from the persecution of the Bonny kings, about two hundred years ago. On first taking up their abode amid the low-lying lands by the mouth of the Kwa Ibo River, they seemed timid and gentle, and of this attitude their neighbours were not slow to take advantage.

Whenever, for instance, an Ibeno hunter killed an elephant—herds of which were, and still are, fairly plentiful amid the marshlands near Stubbs Creek—the head chief of Afa Eket, Edogho by name, used to send and demand the tusks. At first the Ibeno submitted, but at length there came a day when they refused to give them up.

Now the newcomers had neither the land, nor knowledge, necessary for the planting of farms. So they used to bring their smoked fish to exchange for yams, plantains, and other produce in a bush market at the neighbouring village of Urua Ita. Thither therefore went Edogho Afa with a strong, well-armed following, and, when the Ibeno came to trade as usual, he fell upon them, bound them, and carried them captive to his town. After this he sent a messenger to the head chief of Ibeno, saying, "If you do not bring me the tusks you have collected, I will kill the people whom I have taken, or sell them as slaves to a far-off tribe."

When they heard this, the new-comers were very sad, and said: "It is better to do as they demand than lose so many of our kin." So they brought the tusks and asked for their friends in return, but Edogho answered, "First, I told you to bring the tusks only. Now that you have given me all this trouble, you must pay a fine as well." Therefore they paid that also and went back sadly to their town.

After this, the young men wanted to go out and fight the people of Afa Eket, but the old men said, "No. We cannot do so; for, if we fight them, where shall we get fresh chop? We have no farms and are only fisher folk, without so much as a single mimbo grove." So they paid tribute to the Eket people up to the time when Government came.

A trick played upon them by another Ibibio town was thus told by Udaw Owudumo of Ikot Atako:

"The people of Afa Atai had a play, for which the members used to dress like ghosts. Their bodies were covered with strips of palm and other leaves, and over their heads they put native pots, through which they had broken small apertures for eye-holes. So large were these pots that the necks of them rested on the men's shoulders, and gave them a very uncanny appearance.

"Now, soon after the Ibeno came to settle in this part, the people of Afa Atai thought that it would be worth while to play a trick on their new neighbours; so they assumed the dress described above and set out for Ibeno. Arrived near the town they crept softly forward, keeping well in the shelter of the bush; then, at a given signal, burst through and rushed out upon the astonished inhabitants. The latter mistook the intruders for ghosts or devils. Terror seized them at the strange sight, and, catching up their piccans, they fled to bush; while the invaders ransacked the deserted houses and stole whatever pleased them, at least as much as they could carry home. Only after dusk had fallen did the poor Ibeno creep back, to find their provisions of dried fish devoured and many of their most treasured possessions vanished.

"So successful was the raid that the thieves thought it

would be a good plan to play the same trick again on the morrow. Once more they went back laden with plunder. The third day they came again, but meantime the Ibeno people had taken counsel together and said: 'We are tired of these ghosts! To-day, therefore, let us make proof what sort of spirits they may be!' So, instead of running away, all hid in their dwellings. When the thieves came and found the town seemingly deserted, they thought that maybe the people had not dared come back since the day before; so they went into the houses to steal once more. Then the Ibeno rushed forth from their hiding-places and fell upon the invaders; broke the pots from off their heads, tore off the disguising dresses, and flogged them heartily.

"When thus uncovered, the Ibeno recognised some among them for men of Afa Atai and said: 'What! You people have done such a thing as this!' To this the crest-fallen wrongdoers could only answer: 'Yes.'

"Then the Ibeno said: 'You must pay for all you have taken.' On which they proceeded to bind their captives, save two, whom they sent to Afa Atai to tell the townsfolk to come and ransom their kin.

"So the stolen things were brought back and a heavy fine paid. Since that time no one has dared to play such a trick again."

It is at Afa Atai, by the way, that the sacred climbing palm is to be found, in which dwells the soul of the mother of Enwang of Idua Eket, the chief whose brows are bound by the sacred white fillet and who comes to consult the oracle of the climbing palm at certain seasons of the year.

A great deal of information concerning the state of affairs on the lower stretches of the Kwa Ibo before the coming of "white men" in 1871 was kindly confided to us by Mr. Williams, a Sierra Leonian who had settled and built a trading station just one year before. The following is his account:

"According to the best of my belief it was in 1871 that the first white men came into contact with the natives at the mouth of the river. Captain Mackintosh and I

made inquiries about this time as to whether any European had entered the Kwa Ibo, and every one told us: 'No. None has ever come.' Mr. A. A. Robertson of Glasgow, agent for Miller Brothers, was the first white man to cross the bar and penetrate up the river.

"On his arrival, the Ibeno of 'Mkpanek took him to their palaver-house and asked him to swear Juju that he did not come for harm. He stood before the fetish and said: 'Well, Juju! I do not know you! I only know my God; but, as they ask me to swear in your name, I will do so. I have not come to do any harm, only for trade'—and so on.

"Some years before a Bonny man had come during the Harmattan when the sea was quiet. He sat alone in his canoe, steering and paddling; but, to deceive the people, he cut branches of trees and stuck them all round the edge of the boat. From the banks these were seen, bowing in the breeze, as paddlers bend to the stroke. So the people thought that the canoe was full of men.

"When the stranger reached Ibeno he caught up his gun and fired, killing some of the inhabitants who had crowded down to the beach and scattering the others into the bush. At the next town up the river he did the same; at Eket, the same, and so on, right up to Okatt. His was the first Dane gun ever brought to this part of the world; so the people, ignorant of such things, feared greatly and ran away, leaving their goods at the mercy of the newcomer.

"Before Ikarosong was reached, however, news of the strange thing that was coming had been brought to the inhabitants, who gathered together and prepared for war. So soon as the strange canoe with its waving branches came into sight, they took to their boats and surrounded it. Then they learnt the secret—only one man and the first Dane gun! The rash intruder was killed and the incident was called 'the Battle of Awat Ikpon,' *i.e.* of the man who paddles alone.

"In April 1881 King Ja-Ja came from Opobo and raided all the town. With him came many canoes, till the river was full of them. These were very big dug-outs, bigger than the biggest at James Town to-day; so big that they

could hold small cannon quite easily. The true reason of his coming was trade jealousy because Mr. George Watts and I had come here ; but, as a pretence, he raked up an old quarrel. Years before, one of Ja-Ja's men had killed an Ibeno man, whereon the dead man's brother smote the assailant so that he died. Some of the trading boys ran and told Ja-Ja of this, and later, when he grew angry thinking that we should spoil his market, he dug up this old palaver and said that he came to avenge the death of his ' member ' !

" At the time both Mr. Watts and his representative, Mr. Harford, were away, and I was alone at my place, close to theirs, at Uben Akang. I told the Kru boys to keep quiet and not run to bush. Ja-Ja had been warned by the Opobo people not to touch Krus or Sierra Leonians, lest Government should make palaver. Old King Ja-Ja did not come ashore himself, but Chief Cookey Gam came and said : ' You are wise to have acted as you did. Had you run to bush, we should have pretended not to know who you were and so have killed you all.'

" On hearing what had happened, Consul Hewitt took a gun-boat and went round to ask Ja-Ja for an explanation of his action in having killed so many people, especially at Obodu and Ikot Utip, and having carried off at least a hundred as slaves."

According to Mr. John Harford, the whole of these unfortunates were afterwards massacred in cold blood, and exhibited to the townspeople.

The account given by Chief Daniel Henshaw as to the opening up of the river runs as follows :

" It was my father, Chief Effanga Ekan Ansa, known to white men as Joseph Henshaw, who first opened up Ibeno and Eket to trade. After founding the port of Idua Oronn in 1879, Chief Henshaw talked to Mr. George Watt about the Kwa Ibo River, and together they sent Mr. Williams to Ibeno, to visit the land and report on trade prospects. An arrangement was drawn up between the two principals, that, should new firms wish to come in for trading purposes, of each sum paid for the privilege, Chief Henshaw should have two-thirds, as discoverer of the place, and Mr. Watts

one-third. They arranged for the purchase of a cutter which could cross the bar at times. First they started at Ibeno, then went up to Eket, where a factory was opened, as later at Okatt.

“When the Opobo people got to know of this enterprise, Ja-Ja came. For many years there had been jealousy between Opobo and Calabar, so Ja-Ja watched for Chief Henshaw’s departure to Ibeno, then came and plundered everything in the house. All the people fled to bush, and the whole of Calabar shook with fear. My father went by land along the shore to Effiatt, where canoes from Calabar met him at the exact spot where our present District Commissioner shot the crocodile.¹ They brought him home in triumph, and a great play was given to celebrate his safe return. All the chiefs of Calabar took part in this, and the feast lasted for sixteen days.

“Not long afterwards Sir Harry Johnston came. He was a strong man, who ruled justly, and put down Ja-Ja and all who would not obey the law. So, under him, trade grew and the country prospered greatly.”

The above accounts are confirmed by the following information derived from published sources. Messrs. Miller Brothers withdrew their agency on the Kwa Ibo River in 1873, owing to threats from King Ja-Ja of Opobo, who claimed a monopoly of all trade in this region. A Mr. M’Eachan, who also traded in the river “some years before 1881,” retired for a similar reason. Mr. George Watts made an agreement with the Kwa Ibo chiefs on February 7, 1881, and obtained a site for a “factory.” King Ja-Ja at once prepared to drive away the intruders and also punish the local people for their willingness to deal with his rivals.

According to the official account, at daylight on April 11, 1881, some fifty of Ja-Ja’s canoes, flying the British flag and armed with breech-loading cannon and rifles, entered the Kwa Ibo River, bombarded seven villages, five of which—Ikot Etu, Ikot Itak, Ebotiyan, Obarekan, and Mkpanek—they burnt, broke into Mr. Watt’s factory and destroyed or carried off a great part of his goods. Over a hundred prisoners, chiefly women and children, were seized and

¹ See p. 96.

taken to Opobo, where they were slain. Some of Ja-Ja's young sons, mere boys, cut off the heads of the Kwa Ibo children in order to earn the right of wearing the eagle plume.

Consul Hewitt at once went round to Opobo and warned the king that his country did not reach to the Kwa Ibo, which was placed under British protection. This warning, however, did not prevent him from sending a second plundering expedition on May 16, while two trading canoes were also seized by his men on August 18. In 1884 a treaty was made with Ja-Ja by which under certain conditions his kingdom was placed under British protection. In the same year similar agreements were made with the chiefs of Calabar and Tom Shott (Effiatt), by which all the region of the Cross River estuary came under the jurisdiction of the British Consul.

In 1894 Roger Casement and Bouchier marched from Essene, near Opobo, to Ikot Asan, the highest trading point of the African Association, some miles north of Eket Station. They were unable to reach Awa, as they had planned, owing to the hostility shown by the natives, and only got through without mishap owing to the rapidity of their march.

To complete the story, a letter is appended from Mr. A. C. Douglas, to whom, together with Mr. Whitehouse, the opening up of Eket as a Government station is due :

LINCOLN'S INN, W.C.,
Feb. 9th, 1914.

DEAR TALBOT,—I suppose you know the history of the factory. It was once the old British Consulate at Fernando Po, and is an iron bullet-proof house ; it was bought, I think, by the Association, and erected by old John Harford of Bristol, who is really the pioneer of the river. This was about 1888. He was a ship's carpenter in a small sailing barque which was wrecked in the bar, and I believe was the sole survivor ; he washed up somewhere at Ibeno, and eventually got up river as far as Eket, where he built, and traded most successfully for some years with these then very wild Ibibios.

The factory was armed in those days with cannons, and once a week it is reported old Johnny Harford fired off his guns to

clear the political atmosphere ! When I was D.C. there we had an old Gattling gun which Twist, the agent (in defiance of the Brussels Act) refused to hand up to us for a long time, saying it was for the safety of the factory.

A story is told that when Sir Claude MacDonald about 1892 wanted to visit the Kwa Ibo River, from Opobo, Harford remarked he didn't want the protection of any — Consul ! it was his river, and if Major MacDonald wanted to come in he would have to fight for his right to do so. I believe that astute diplomatist sent his brother-in-law Armstrong, then Vice-Consul at Opobo, and who met with a somewhat cold reception from Harford and had to sleep in his canoe.

King Ja-Ja, as you have probably heard, played a large part in the opening of the river, and cut the Ja-Ja creek, now known as the Opobo creek, which you probably know. Chief Cookey Gam (his photo is here) was his head boy, and told me he was "Captain for ten thousand niggers," and superintended the cutting of the creek. A great slaughter of the Ibenos followed the Bonny men's arrival in the river, and many were taken as slaves to Opobo. I found the name of Bonny man or Ibanni, as they were called, was enough even in my time to strike terror into the Ibibios when I first became political officer there and opened negotiations with them in 1898.

The firm African Association, as I told you, had kept the secrets of the river and the bar to themselves, and rather resented the advent of a Government representative ; they had of course the monopoly of all the trade for some years. Thompson, their auditor, told me it was by far their most paying factory, and he hoped no opposition would ever come in. MacIver's agent in Opobo was the intruder, and it happened in this way. We were laying the Eket and Oron telegraph line in 1903-4 and . . . the Calabar Secretariat started bombarding me with . . . missives *re* getting telegraph material round. I wrote to the agent Twist to charter the steamer ; he had a little liver that day, and replied, " the — Government could wait ; he wanted a load of gin from Calabar first."

I was annoyed at this, so went to Opobo that day overland, and just caught the yacht with Mr. Widenham Fosbery, Acting High Commissioner, on board, and got him to sign a contract with MacIver to bring our stuff round, I personally guaranteeing to pilot the vessel in ; I also gave him a chart we had in our office, and he reached Eket safely, much to the annoyance and disgust of the agent, who had so long held the key of the situation.

My acquaintance with the Ibibios commenced in October 1898, when I was sent from Opobo to start the District. No

staff was allowed me (estimates not permitting), but I succeeded in drawing on the Opobo staff for four Court messengers, one marine boy, and an interpreter; the latter distinguished himself by bolting at the first "palaver."

Mr. Bedwell had previously (from Calabar) been "held up" there, and had his knee smashed. I was the next Consul they saw. The night I arrived the wily Eket celebrated the occasion by breaking into the factory, taking, stealing, and carrying away most of Twist's crockery and other household utensils.

I was awakened by him bursting into my room, saying, "This is the result of the Government being here." Shortly after daylight, Twist, Chiefs Oko and Udo Eket and myself, together with the interpreter and four police, started off to visit this refractory village in a vain endeavour to recover our lost goods. Several bush guns went off all round us, and at this the interpreter bolted. Twist then beat a hasty retreat, leaving me with the two chiefs and two police, the other two bobbies having bolted with the interpreter.

Later on in the scrimmage Oko lost his Idiong (ring) crown. I therefore had to retire as gracefully as I could; he regained us shortly after, coming out of the bush like a bolting rabbit. I gathered he had suffered a great indignity to his position, and was exceedingly angry with his countrymen and the situation generally.

Later on we all joined up the rest of the party and reached the factory safely. After a vigorous report from me, a column arrived, and afterwards dealt with these refractory savages and reduced them to order. I believe that some months after Twist recovered all his crockery ware and household effects.

But it took seven separate expeditions to reduce these truculent savages to order; that is, order such as you, a D.C., in 1913, find them in; for they had a wonderful knack of bobbing up again and giving trouble after being beaten, and from a military point of view are the most "sporting tribe" imaginable.

The various doings of the several political officers and their "holdings up," are they not written in the Official Intelligence book? They include Crewe Read (who was nearly murdered), James Watt, who admitted to me once he thought his last hour had come; and amongst this sporting tribe (who were no respecter of persons) sundry "Brass-hats" suffered a similar fate.

The telegraph party which I have mentioned before got safe through to Oron under Woodroffe, but this was owing to their safety in numbers; but some months later, when I was on leave, Beverley, who was acting for me, sent James through with fifteen men only, and then our friends got their own back.

At some village half-way across at night-fall, while James

was performing his ablutions, and Beverley probably counting his men or mounting guard, the wily Ibibios made an attack on the party. Soldiers and carriers, etc., scattered, and Beverley solemnly reported a serious reverse! One soldier was said to have been killed, but I found him afterwards in a village near where Crewe Read was nearly killed under very humorous circumstances.

I had gone down with an escort of twenty-eight men to arrest a murderer (twenty-five men the military thought quite ample, but of course it is not, *i.e.* if the town is hostile and, as was the case, didn't want to give their man up).

After a long palaver and talking much hot air, I, however, secured the prisoner, and it being too dark to leave with him, had to camp in the town that night; after the uproar that had ensued all the afternoon in the palaver square, the silence was disconcerting and ominous. My interpreter and the sergeant both woke me up by coming into my tent, the former to tell me, "Some bad thing go meet us to-morrow," and the sergeant to report he had twenty-six men now, not twenty-five! It appears Beverley's lost soldier of a year ago, finding himself in good company again, joined us in the night. He had been a prisoner with them for a year. He was a Yoruba, and the men, I heard, were chaffing him a good deal and called him the Ibibio soldier. I saw them shaving his head in the night, a native custom to celebrate the return of a captive. On attempting to leave the town next day with my murderer, at a given signal the whole village, with several others, rushed us from behind, knocking the whole of the carriers over as well as half of the escort. The sergeant bravely held on to the prisoner, and begged my permission to fire, but as the whole town had guns, and we had only ten rounds a man, I saw it would be fatal to provoke hostilities; and while I was trying to collect the terrified carriers and prevent the men firing, some one put a long arm and a matchet out of the bush, cut the tie-tie rope, and our prisoner was gone!

The Ibibio soldier during all this, evidently thinking he was really on the losing side, deserted us and rejoined his old friend the enemy once more! Some weeks later, with a proper escort, ninety-five men and a Maxim, we tackled the town, rearrested the murderer, and then the Ibibio soldier elected to rejoin again; but after the C.O. heard of his previous escapade and cowardly conduct, he took him back only as a prisoner under escort, gave him a dozen lashes and, I believe, dismissed him from the regiment with ignominy.

Here are a few anecdotes to fill your paper or book with.—
Yours very truly,

A. C. DOUGLAS.

I may add, for the consolation of my kind correspondent, that the state of "law and order" in which I found the people in 1913 was by no manner of means oppressive; and I am able to testify that his old friends the Ibibio still live up to the character he gives them.¹

¹ Further historical notes on this region will be found in my report on the Census of the Southern Provinces of Nigeria, 1921.

The following extract from an article in *West Africa* of April 21, 1923, tells of Eket District in 1919:

"When the armistice with Germany was signed, Eket was in a restless state; there was an unsettled boundary dispute of long standing; there had been no troops available to give visible weight to the decisions of the Administrative Officer in charge; and there were many criminals—murderers with long records of victims—who had evaded justice owing to the passive resistance offered to the police by dissatisfied villages. Of these criminals several were women, of whom one, at least, had openly boasted that even if she were caught the English were 'too fool' (too tender-hearted) to hang a woman.

"At the time, there appeared to the Eket peoples to be very little fear of British intervention. . . .

"'A' Company of the 3rd Nigeria Regiment left Calabar for Oron on March 25, whence it visited many of the more important villages in the direction of Eket, burning not a few, as could be seen from Calabar during the early part of April. . . .

"During these operations, many criminals, whose capture had long proved impossible, were brought in, and it was decided to hold a trial as rapidly as was compatible with justice. The general unrest and disregard for law in the area made it advisable that the punishment of those found guilty should be as public as possible, and . . . the sentence was duly carried out . . . on May 4."

CHAPTER XXII

IBENO TO OKON EKKPO (JAMES TOWN)

ONE morning, after a short stay at Ibeno, we started to cross a little-known stretch of bush land to the eastward which proved, from the beginning, rich in flowers new to our collection, many new to science also.

After a while the country grew wilder. The path degenerated into a mere track, two to three feet deep at times and not more than six inches broad to the tread. This necessitated care in going, as Europeans, unlike natives, find it hard to place the feet one before the other instead of side by side. The difficulties of the way too were greatly heightened by the fascination of the vegetation on either side, which constantly drew our eyes from the snares of the path ; especially when at a turn in the road we came upon a *Napoleona* not only unknown to us but surely new to science, since this was the first to be found growing upon a liane, while of the eight or so of this interesting family formerly known we could not remember one which, even remotely, resembled the new discovery.

After this find it became almost impossible to keep a sufficiently wary eye upon the path, and one or two painful stumbles resulted ; but who, among those who have experienced the fascination of botanising in what is practically new territory, could count the cost of graze or bruise when suddenly entering a forest of *Napoleonas* of bewildering beauty, fragrance, and diversity of form and tint ? The next new species found was one with a shell-pink pistil, staminal whorl of vivid rose, and second whorl edged with oval spots of white set in crimson.

Hardly was this passed, when another creeper met our

eyes, some twenty metres long and covered with blooms of apricot and white. Then, after one or two known varieties a fourth new species with winged stems burst into view, and next two more with serrated leaves, though all previously known, had, to the best of our belief, had their edges intact. During the last two tours in the Oban District it had been our good fortune to double the known varieties of this interesting family ; but I doubt if any botanist had ever before the joy of adding during a single walk seven new species to so fascinating and rare a group.

Nor was this all. Before leaving England, Dr. Otto Stapf, F.R.S., of the Kew Herbarium, had impressed upon us the importance of investigating the agencies by which the cauliflorous flowers of this region are fertilised. The problem as to why bark-flowering trees, so rare in other places, should exist in such countless varieties in those parts of the west coast where we have been enabled to make a special study of them, forms an attractive riddle. Dr. Stapf suggested that a solution might be found by studying the slugs, snails, and insects most attracted to those singular growths. Ever since our return we had been anxiously looking for anything of the kind ; but had as yet discovered nothing, save the added mystery that one or two species found flowering in the ordinary way at Oban were seen to grow cauliflorously in the Eket marsh-lands. On this walk, however, a slug much like a shell-less snail was discovered on several varieties of *Napoleona* : a specimen was at once procured and forwarded to Kew. In all, this single bush march of just over ten miles yielded thirty-two specimens new to our collection, a gratifying result when one considers that this is already on its way into the fourth thousand.

Had scratches and bruises been the only penalty for so rich a harvest they would have been held cheap enough ; but alas ! we woke from our exciting search to the discovery that a turning which should have been followed was missed long since ; and the guide, who had undertaken responsibility for keeping our feet in the way they should go, protested, with many demands on our sympathy, that, having quite forgotten the name of the town to which he had

promised to lead us, he had followed as fancy led and was now as ignorant as ourselves as to our whereabouts! He suggested hopefully, however, that if we kept on long enough the path must surely lead somewhere in the end, and, for want of better, we felt constrained to follow his advice. At last we discovered our carriers, who had also lost their way and been led, by a merciful dispensation of Providence, along other paths to the same destination.

We had the mortification of finding ourselves far from welcome visitors. The arrival of the District Commissioner in this town was as unexpected as unpremeditated, and no precautions had therefore been taken to clean the place or clear the road. The tone of the people was consequently by no means cordial, and our unfortunate cook, a man of irreproachable manners, son of the head chief of an important town, found his inquiries as to where a chicken and some vegetables could be bought met by a burst of fury on the part of the man whom he happened to question. The latter asserted that, though house and home should be burnt in consequence, no information would be given by him. This expression, inexplicable at the time, was later explained, when we learned of the false assertions made by disaffected elements that I was about to carry fire and sword throughout the District. Up till now carriers and attendants had always shown a preference for taking up their quarters in stuffy village compounds, rather than in the clean camp pitched for us some distance away. To-night they all crowded round our temporary abode and began raising little shelters rather than seek lodgings in neighbouring houses. When asked the reason for this sudden change of habit, they answered unanimously that they "Done fear too much," since women as well as men threatened to fight them if they approached the town.

On starting next morning the roads were found barred by stout fences, ostensibly to keep goats and sheep from eating the young corn and yam shoots in wayside farms, but which would also act as protection in inter-town warfare. These obstacles were crossed by rough stiles; but the difficulty thus placed in the way of traders, or

indeed of all load-bearers, was too great to be allowed to continue.

At Adukum, after clambering over one of these annoying impediments, we found ourselves in a large compound which at first sight seemed deserted like all others through which we had passed that morning—a circumstance which we put down to the fact that the owners were probably away at farm work, though we afterwards learned that, owing to the widespread calumnies already referred to, they had fled in terror at our approach.

Suddenly we became aware that this compound was not empty. On a log of wood laid across the threshold of the principal door sat a lonely figure robed from head to foot in a long garment of black velvet, immovable and tragic—bringing to mind some hero of old, hopeless, but facing doom with indomitable courage. Just so might a Roman senator have sat, awaiting the onslaught of the barbarians before whom he scorned to flee.

Not until we had approached to within a few feet did the quiet form show the least sign of life. Then he silently rose and stood before us, a tall figure, paler than most of his race, though of pure blood, with clear-cut features and steady eyes. So distinctly was the expression of danger, faced unflinchingly, mirrored in their depths, that we involuntarily glanced round to see what peril could be threatening so obviously brave a man.

Nothing was to be seen but our carriers, drinking from a great water-pot which they had discovered, and the quaint little khaki-clad figures of my two companions, dressed as usual in marching kit. It was on us that the chief's eyes rested, as if quietly weighing us according to some standard of his own.

Surely presentiments are unreliable things, or we should have been made aware, by some subliminal sense, that this quiet figure had stood, and was still standing, between us and death; for, as already related,¹ 'Ndemm 'Nyenn alone, the chief who now stood before us, had refused to have any hand in the murder of a man who had done his people no wrong.

¹ P. 265.

The guide now took the opportunity to disclaim further knowledge of the road, and as all the other inhabitants had disappeared, the chief himself offered, with grave courtesy, to lead us to our destination.

From now on, broad stretches of farm land alternated with belts of bush, each with some new floral treasure to offer, until Uda was reached. This town stands above a wide stretch of water, and is the home of several powerful Jujus already described.¹

Far as the eye could reach along the Uda creek no vegetation but mangrove was to be seen. This stretch of water was negotiated in dug-outs. Then came another march, and another creek; but this time the tide was out, and we walked for some half-mile along the oozy bed, watching schools of mud-fish scatter in every direction on our approach.

These curious little creatures usually swim with the head above water, or skim the surface, almost in the manner of flying-fish. When high and dry, on mud flats or banks, they walk at a great rate by reason of their feet-like fins, which leave queer little herring-bone tracks in the soft mud. Their enormous goggle eyes glance sharply hither and thither, looking like two black beads set close together.

After a while, a sudden turn to the right brought us to the edge of the water a few feet deep, where a small dug-out was in waiting to carry us down a narrow channel into a deep creek some three or four hundred yards across. As the town for which we were making was marked on the latest map as many miles from the nearest water, we were agreeably surprised, after landing on a beach into the mud of which the feet sank from one to two feet at every step, to find our destination only a few yards from the bank.

Hardly had we settled down in our quarters than, just as daylight was fading, a long file of women came back from their work in the farms. In front walked a sinister figure, her head covered with a piece of cloth which overhung the brows, then fell, cowl-like, on either side. From the shadow beneath two dark eyes shone feverishly, set in an animated skull; for nose and lips had been eaten

¹ See p. 33.

away by some terrible disease, while the skin, either unusually pale for one of her race or rubbed with white chalk, was tightly drawn across the cheek bones—giving an effect something between “*Der Tod als Freund*” and Sintram’s “*Little Master*.” My companions were grateful for the waning daylight and the homely aspect of our surroundings; for to have met so terrible a “*Death in Life*” amid the way-side tombs of a moonlit bush-path would have sent a shudder through stronger nerves than theirs.

At dawn we set forth once more, and, after another interesting march, reached the sea again, on the opposite side of the District to that from which we had started.

Our destination, Okon Ekkpo (James Town) lies at the point where the river, called by white people after Chief James, a Calabar trader, who had settled there, but known as “*Mbo*” by natives, flows into the Cross River and thence, through a little bay, into the Gulf of Guinea.

Here too the land is low-lying, the only piece of high ground being a sandy bluff of curious formation, apparently the delta between long-dead river mouths. Since there was no suitable rest-house a site had to be found, and a magnificent one offered upon the high land just described, which falls sheer to the beach. We landed at a little sandy cove on the right, which gave access to a settlement of fisher-folk, some way to the rear. Here, on the beach in the shelter of the bluff, a small shed was to be seen, built over a collection of Juju pots and posts, together with a perfectly preserved human skull, over which palm-oil and other libations had lately been poured. This was the shrine of Abassi Esuk, the God of the Beach, and was placed there to protect canoes and nets, and ensure plentiful catches to its worshippers.

On the plateau above, a great tree spread protecting arms between us and the fierce sunshine; and amid the dead leaves piled about its roots lay several objects so beautiful in shape and colour that they drew from us an involuntary gasp of longing. They were a torque, crown, anklets, and bracelets of bronze, of fine workmanship, apparently very old, and weathered to the most perfect shades of blue and green, till they looked as if partly hewn

from solid turquoise and partly from chrysoprase. Amid them lay a small flat sacrificial stone, rusty-red in tone.

Obviously the tree had once been regarded as of more than usual sanctity; but those who brought the offerings had long ago passed away, for the condition of the undergrowth showed that the place had been undisturbed for many years. It was a great temptation therefore, since they belonged to no one, to take possession of the beautiful objects, especially of the crown, which lay in such a position that, without touching it, we could see it was wrought in a pattern of interlacing snakes. Fear of wounding the susceptibilities of the people, however, kept us from hinting at our desire to purchase all, or any, of the ornaments. It seemed to be a case of virtue rewarded, for the particular tree fell during a tornado, not long after the rest of the ground had been cleared for the new buildings. The owners of the land were then approached on the subject, and the torque is at present in our possession.

It transpired that the tree had been a special object of veneration, to which women from all parts of the District came on long pilgrimages. It was supposed to have the power of granting fertility to those who performed the necessary rites, as well as to protect them in childbirth and at all times of danger. Young girls too, before entering and after leaving the "Fatting House," came to ask a blessing from the indwelling Dryad, who was thought to confer the power of attracting the hearts of wooers. So famous were the oracles given from this grove that it was named 'Mkpang Utong, *i.e.* The Place of Listening Ears.

To the right of the rest-house lies the open sea, while before it the mouths of the Akwa Yafe and Kwa Rivers may be seen. To the left the Cross River flows down from behind a green promontory, on the shores of which a little colony of friendly fisher-folk have built their palm-leaf huts so close to the water's edge that the waves at high tide actually lap against the frail walls. On the shores of this promontory, and almost in view of the rest-house, is the shrine of the great Juju Ita Brinyan.¹

A quarter of an hour's paddling in the long canoes brings

¹ P. 50.

one to Effiatt Island, usually called Tom Shott by white men, against the farther shore of which surge the breakers of the open sea.

On the wave-worn beach of the opposite shore stands the remnant of Onossi, once a thriving settlement from Atabong in the Eket District, but now little more than a group of fisher huts left standing when the rest was washed away. The people here believe that, after sunset of the day on which a great chief dies at Calabar, a canoe may be seen slipping through the shadows towards their town. Its coming is heralded by the sound of tom-toms, played by no mortal hand ; and it is driven forward by paddles, the wood of which "neither grew in syke nor ditch, nor yet in ony sheugh." "Up the big mighty creek of Onossi" passes the phantom canoe, to a ghost town thought to exist near its source.

The more sheltered water to landward is peopled, at certain times of the year, by flocks of egrets, skimming the surface, settling amid the trees of the mainland at high tide, or strutting about on the yellow sand left visible at low. On the wing, their long necks are drawn in till they seem quite short and pouched, but on land there is no disguising the grace of the long curves, as they bend hither and thither preening wings and breast or searching for prey. Whether against a background of blue sky or sombre storm cloud, golden sand or green bush, these beautiful birds seem the whitest things on earth.

According to local legend, in the dry season, just before flood time, two great serpents swim slowly through the water hereabouts. No one knows whence they come, but, having met, they swim side by side, many yards apart, toward the mouth of the Kwa River. Arrived there, they link tails and, stretched like a great rope almost from side to side, begin to move up stream.

"Before them they force the water, which advances in a great wave, the sound of which is louder and deeper than that driven before the prow of a steamer. 'Brr-oo-oo ! Brr-oo-oo ! Brr-oo-oo !' warns the oncoming water. Then those who are out in canoes must ship their paddles and cling to overhanging branches by the bank, while the helmsman steers very carefully or they will all be drowned.

“ Right up the river swim the serpents, driving the water before them, till they reach Esuk Atu, where dwells the great fresh-water Juju Idemm. As a sign of respect to this, the snakes untwine their tails and allow the water to fall until the holy spot is left behind. Afterwards they join again, and once more drive the water before them as far as Etunkpe Creek. The tide always follows. Sometimes they come twice in a month. The wave which they drive before them is called Awawa, and people name the day of their coming Awawa day.” Such is the local explanation of the Kwa River Bore.¹

The great dug-out canoes which one sees round James-town are the most valuable possessions of their owners. Sometimes they are large enough to hold twelve puncheons of palm oil, and may cost anything up to a hundred pounds or more. The price depends not only on size and workmanship, but also upon the character of the indwelling spirit ; for no one cares to entrust his own safety, or that of puncheons worth fifteen to twenty pounds apiece, to a canoe of which the presiding sprite is mischievous or malignant.

A few months ago, one of the chiefs gave an order for a specially fine dug-out. A huge tree was chosen, felled, halved and hollowed in the usual manner. By some misfortune the rites for inducing a strong but beneficent Djinn to take up abode within seemed to have failed. Whether the tree had been possessed by a malignant spirit which refused to be driven forth, or whether some ill-wisher wrought a charm by which a mischievous sprite was attracted into the new craft, remains a matter of doubt. In any case, the chief who had given the order refused to accept the boat in spite of its fine long lines and unusual spaciousness. “ What is the use of so great a craft to me,” he argued, “ when the canoe-sprite seeks to drown all who set foot within ? I would rather have a small boat the indwelling spirit of which is steady and well disposed, than the greatest canoe ever cut possessed by one of such unreliable character as this ! ”

¹ Cf. the Malay belief that bores are “ caused by the passage of some gigantic animal, most probably a sort of dragon ” (Skeat, *Malay Magic*, p. 10).

At the prows of all the larger craft three small square bosses are usually carved. These are regarded as representations of the spirit, and before them plantains and other small offerings of food are laid, while strips of cloth intended as garments hang from the point.¹

When a canoe starts to crack and split, the indwelling Mana also begins to fail in strength, like a man growing weak and frail by reason of advancing years. So soon as the boat has grown too old for safety, it is cut up and serves to mend others. By those who still hold to old customs, however, the prow is never used for such a purpose, but is sawn off about a yard below the square bosses and then placed high and dry on the beach, or beneath some Juju shed. This is done that the Djinn may still have a place of shelter here on earth instead of being driven forth into the spirit world. When this last refuge decays it can no longer linger in the sunshine, but must at length set forth for the realm of ghosts.

The bottoms of old canoes are often cut into long strips some foot and a half in width. These serve as floats for small brown urchins who swim upon them, with over-arm action, toward the family fishing-nets, the position of which is marked by posts. As our canoe passed among them, the edge of the board, seen sideways, showed a striking likeness to the strange up-curved, ambach floats used by the Buduma on Lake Chad.

There is an odd little superstition here, no trace of which

¹ For similar Malay beliefs cf. Skeat, *op. cit.* p. 279. "The ship being a living organism, one must, of course, when all is ready, persuade it to make a proper start. To effect this you go on board, and sitting down beside the well (Petak ruang) burn incense and strew the sacrificial rice, and then tapping the inside of the keelson (Jintekkan serempu) and the next plank above it (Apit lempong), beg them to adhere to each other during the voyage; *e.g.* :

'Peace be with you, O big Medang and low-growing Medang!
Be ye not parted, brother from brother.
I desire you to speed me to the utmost of your power
(To such and such a place).
If ye will not, ye shall be rebels against God,' etc.

I need hardly explain, perhaps, that 'Big Medang' and 'Low-growing Medang' are the names of two varieties of the same tree which are supposed in the present instance to have furnished the timber from which these different parts are made." See also Mary Kingsley, *op. cit.*

has been found in other parts of the District, to the effect that local gnats and midges have the power to talk like men.

A narrow creek separates Effiatt Island from the mainland, and a short way down this, to the right, lies a stretch of sand just raised above the mangrove swamp. To this, in olden days, all small-pox sufferers were sent, and little heaps of broken pots may still be seen placed there as offerings to the Juju. This scourge was very prevalent in the neighbourhood, and when an epidemic swept through it is said that the crocodiles were quick to hear the news. "They gathered round the little beach, attracted by the horrible smell of the disease. In the night time they used to creep up to the houses and seize sick people out of their beds, knowing that such were helpless and could not defend themselves. Leopards, on the contrary, appear to avoid towns on which this scourge has fallen, as the smell offends their nostrils."

Right through Effiatt runs another new creek, unmapped before our arrival. This leads to Akwa Obio Effiatt, the home of the great Oboyemi Juju, on which the prosperity of the town depends and which, the inhabitants say, gives them "life." A great carved ivory tusk lies in its shrine.

Farther south is the mouth of Widenham Creek, named after a former Provincial Commissioner, Mr. Widenham Fosbery, to whom I and mine owe many a kindness. Into this creek flows that of Inua Abassi (God's Mouth) leading to the town of the same name. In the mud opposite the entrance of this little water-way a strong post is to be seen, to which in the old days a human sacrifice was annually bound, to be drowned by the rising tide, at the beginning of the fishing season. In these degenerate days only a goat may be offered.

The town of Inua Abassi is of considerable size and, as no clay is to be found in this part of the world, the houses are built entirely of wood and palm-leaf. Such dwellings are naturally inflammable, and as a result the inhabitants take the curious precaution of keeping all their more valuable property in fenced-in spaces open to the sky, so that it may be more easily saved in case of fire.

Little of any value was to be seen amid these treasured belongings, which mostly consisted of cheap crockery and a few brass trays and lamps, all of modern European manufacture. Thrown away amid the yams outside, however, we stumbled across a long spear-head, of a type well known in Northern Nigeria and Central Africa. From the beautiful tint of its weathering, it was plain to see that this was not made of iron or steel. Before touching it, I asked if the owner of the land would be willing to sell it, and was told that, since it had been flung away as old and worthless, I was welcome to take it if I chose. Examination proved it to be of copper and, though cracked and bent, of fine workmanship and great age.

The people of Effiatt and the region south of Jamestown are of very mixed race, as, owing to the ease with which supervision can be avoided, the neighbourhood serves as a kind of Alsatia for surrounding tribes, but the majority of them are probably Efik. The inhabitants gain their livelihood by fishing, for which purpose they spend the greater part of the year on the other side of the estuary.

From Jamestown we went on up the river until we reached Urua Eye, where anything but a friendly reception awaited us. Here again carriers and boys refused to have any dealings with the townsfolk, but spent the night crowded together as near as possible to our quarters; because here too they "done fear too much."

On leaving next morning, we noticed vultures crowding the roofs of one of the compounds and the branches of neighbouring trees. Below, on the ground, was a horrible red stain, nearly six feet across, showing that either a considerable number of goats and sheep or some larger sacrifice had been offered there. Later we learned the reason.

The chiefs of the place had for years been amassing large sums of money by holding an illegal court. They were naturally anxious that their ill-deeds should not come to light and so joined in the plot against us. The blood-stain was caused by a sacrifice lately made with the object of ensuring success to the venture.

Here, as till a few years ago on the Kwa Ibo, human sacrifices were offered by the fisher-folk to the God of the

River in order to bribe him into sending rich hauls. Abassi Esuk, the God of the Beach, received similar offerings should the rainy season be unduly delayed, or if there was unusual dearth of water during the dries. Now that the coming of Government and the teaching of the missionaries has put an end to such things, or at least made them matters of extreme difficulty and danger, a goat is substituted. Its blood is made to flow over the beach, and its head flung far out into the current, as an offering to the deity.

On another occasion we went from Ibeno to Jamestown by a different path from that taken on our first visit—this time following the banks of Stubbs and Widenham Creeks. It was nearly four months later in the year and the vegetation was quite changed in character. The *Napoleonas* showed only fruits of gold-like *Hesperidean* apples, but everywhere giant acacias were to be seen, tossing masses of bloom, the exact tint of “Princess of Wales” violets against the blue sky. In places the path was covered with the fallen florets, and once we came to a broad pool the surface of which was so thickly strewn as to form a solid-looking cloth of azure—such an one as *Proserpine* might have been making on that sad day when *Pluto* found her, wandering amid Sicilian fields, seeking violets to weave into a sky-robe for her father *Zeus*.

Through swamp after swamp we passed, and over streams the ice-cold water of which reached our shoulders. In places, far as the eye could see, beneath the low undergrowth, the road was carpeted with soft velvety moss. Here and there toad-stools of brilliant scarlet stood out, jewel-like, against this emerald background; while small frogs, of the exact shade of the fungi, hopped between.

Backward and forward over the main creek led the road. Bridges were either broken or non-existent. At one point, while crossing a particularly evil-looking swamp, in single file, by means of a crazy erection of tree-trunks and tie-tie, the rotten wood suddenly gave way beneath the feet of my sister-in-law and she disappeared from sight amid the high reeds below. The procession stopped in horror, gazing down at the place where she had vanished and, with many a shake of the head, declaring sadly that



STUBB'S CREEK.



BASE OF SACRED EBIRIBONG TREE, SURROUNDED BY PLAITED MAT,
DENOTING DRY AND RAINY SEASONS. (See p. 315.)

she was "quite, quite gone," meantime effectually blocking the narrow way, so that it was impossible for me to reach the spot. Fortunately, however, with her usual discretion, she had chosen a comparatively solid place on which to fall—a little island in the surrounding morass—whence, after struggling upon her feet, she presently emerged between the parted reeds, much in the attitude of the Egyptian maid watching Moses from amid the bulrushes in the old Bible picture.

At our last crossing the creek was broad, reaching to my shoulders, and in many cases up to the carriers' chins. I walked across as usual, but the interpreter elected to be carried. The result was that the head of his unfortunate bearer disappeared under water, after which there was a catastrophe and both reached the bottom together.

A few yards farther the country opened out into a strange narrow belt of grass land, which extended for several miles. The presence of this oasis of herbage amid the surrounding forest forms a problem difficult to solve. So far as could be determined by casual examination, the soil seems to contain nothing different to that of other parts of the District. Chemical analysis might, however, reveal the presence of some mineral prejudicial to luxuriant growth. In this open stretch a Calabar trader named Entete has built a settlement. Round the base of the Juju post before his house various skulls were to be seen, among them that of a rare species of bush-buck.

Entete himself acted as our guide next day through the strange narrow belt of grass land, which, save for an occasional clump of thin bush, stretches as far as Esuk Ekkpo Abassi. From thence onward the bush resumes its sway, every other branch garlanded by long trails of sweet-scented orchids, while several new species of flowers were discovered.

Yet, for all its desolation, the region has other attractions beside floral ones. Here, it would appear, herds of pigmy elephant, the skull of one of which we first found in a Juju house in the northern part of the District, range at will. Hunter after hunter informed us, quite independently, that sometimes as many as a hundred of these

strange, fierce little pachyderms may be seen at one time in the bush hereabouts. The temptation just for once to break Government regulations as to the non-shooting of elephants with tusks under twenty-five pounds weight was almost too strong ; but reflection as to the impropriety of setting so bad an example luckily intervened " to check the erring and reprove." Added to this sense of duty was a certain hope that influence might possibly be brought to bear to allow of steps being taken to secure one specimen of the species for the Natural History Museum and, if fortune specially favoured, another for the Zoological Gardens. Unfortunately these dreams were doomed to unfulfilment, first through pressure of work, and secondly by my sudden transfer.

Local hunters declare that they dread these pigmies more than their greater brethren, to whom they are said to act as an advance guard. At a distance, at which alone I have caught sight of them, it was impossible to state definitely that they belonged to a distinct species, though it seems improbable that so large a number of young ones should go about independently without so much as a single full-sized elephant in sight.

The next place reached was Unyenga, a fair-sized town unvisited by a white Commissioner since the punitive expedition of 1902. The people seemed quite friendly and the roads were cleaned, though signs were not wanting to show that this had only been effected within the last few days, probably not before news of our proposed visit had reached the chiefs.

Later it transpired that the friendship was only skin-deep. After we had left, in fact, the head chief sent out and threatened those people of the neighbouring villages who, in obedience to orders, were clearing the road for a new trade route. It afterwards came to light that he had good reason for wishing his territory to escape the attention of the white man. The alacrity with which the people of the neighbourhood, hitherto subject to his dominion, took up the suggestion as to improving the means of communication showed that they at least welcomed the idea of more intimate supervision.

CHAPTER XXIII

IDUA TO ATABONG

UP yet another creek lies the town of Idua Asang, which, like greater Idua, claims to have been founded by the first-comers to this part of the world, driven steadily seaward by the later-arrived Oronn. Many years ago the neighbouring towns, Eyo Abassi and Ikwita, made war upon the Iduans, defeated them with great slaughter and drove them forth from their homes. There was nowhere for the conquered to flee, save to the desolate mangrove swamps, where for a while they lived in great misery, "like monkeys amid the branches" overhanging the treacherous, evil-smelling mud.

Some time before this defeat the people of 'Nda Okkobor had quarrelled with their neighbours of Ebighi Okkobor. The two towns fought and the first was victorious. Then the vanquished went to work in a cunning way. They sent hunters into the bush to kill a leopard and bring its body secretly to their town. The gall was extracted; for, according to a widespread belief on the West Coast, this, prepared with magic rites, forms a powerful poison.¹ When all was ready, the people of Ebighi went at twilight and dug a hole in the sand by the spring whence the drinking water of their enemies was drawn. Next day, at dawn, the women of 'Nda came thither, filled their jars and carried them home; then cooked chop and gave to their husbands and children. All ate and drank and nearly all died from the poison, so the town was left desolate. When the few survivors heard what had befallen the Iduans and that the latter had no place in which to live, they

¹ Cf. *In the Shadow of the Bush*, p. 27.

went out across the swamp, calling to the refugees to come down and speak with them. When this was done, they said :

“ You have no place in which to dwell, while we have much land and many empty homesteads. Come, therefore, and settle among us, and we will give you all you need.”

The Iduans were glad to hear this and followed to the place pointed out. Only a small creek led to the new town, but this they soon broadened and deepened so as to provide a better approach. The bush too was cleared and a little beach made as a landing-place.

Our visit to Idua was unexpected, since it was the first made by a District Commissioner for fifteen years. The people seemed gentle and biddable, however ; for when a deep pit to the left of the main street was shown them, and it was explained that the swarms of mosquitoes breeding in the stagnant water caused the death of many children, they did not wait for orders, but at once ran for hoes, spades, and shovels, and began filling it in. Later, when the same danger was pointed out from the larvae breeding in a decayed canoe, a rush was made for this and it was at once rolled over so that it should no longer hold water.

As we followed the road inland, through Okkobbor country, toward the town of Ube, each person met gave a pleasant word of greeting, then dropped lightly on one knee, at the same time raising a hand in the graceful salutation usual amid this race. Along the way, we were told, grew sacred trees, each of which was a “ very big Juju,” and, always supposing that the proper sacrifices were made, could give “ plenty piccans ” and other favours for the asking.

Just before Ube, the first of these was reached—a magnificent specimen, the bole of which rises straight for over a hundred feet, supporting a crown of great branches spreading symmetrically in every direction.

The name of the indwelling spirit is “ Ebiribong,” and in his honour, at the time of the new yam planting, a great play is held and a he-goat sacrificed. The holy images are brought out with dancing, singing, and much rejoicing,



EBIRIBONG TREE.

and set in the clear space at the foot of the tree, where nothing is allowed to grow save the young leaves of the *Thaumatococcus*, from the dried and flattened stems of which sleeping mats are made. Chains and cords woven from such stems are festooned round the images, and there seems to be some idea in the native mind that by encircling these a blessing will be drawn down upon all bridal beds, the mats of which are plaited from like material. This ceremony every single inhabitant of Ube Okkobbor must attend. Should any have gone on long journeys, or be detained elsewhere from some cause, they must be sought and brought back before the rites can be carried out.

At the foot of the great trunk, facing the entrance in the fence which separates the enclosure from the main road, stands a small hut built over one of the gnome-shaped ant-hills. A few feet above this, round the mighty bole, a long fringed mat of plaited palm is hung. This, like the one already described,¹ symbolises rainbow and lightning, the dry and the rainy seasons.²

The inhabitants of Ube stated that their town had never before been visited by a white man. It was clean and well kept, but the people were busy giving it an extra "tidying up" in honour of our coming. A little beyond it another tall tree was passed. This is named 'Ndemm Óisong, and is supposed to have the power of conferring long life upon its worshippers.

Farther on still, near Atabong, we came across a third sacred tree, which had been struck by lightning some years ago. This misfortune is said so to have enraged the indwelling dryad that sacrifices have had to be made ever since, lest in anger he should harm passers-by.

The story of the founding of Atabong town is as follows :

"Once long ago in a village to the north of Calabar lived a tribe of Efik fisher-folk called Adiabo. These used

¹ P. 38.

² Similar symbols may be found in Murray Island, Torres Straits, where, to cause rain, "four large screens, composed of plaited coconut leaves, were placed at the head, foot, and sides of the grave to represent clouds . . . and coconut leaves with their leaflets pointing downwards were suspended close by to represent rain" (Haddon, *Magic and Fetishism*, p. 16).

to earn their living by diving to collect shell-fish, which they sold to neighbouring people, until a strange fatality settled on one of the principal families. This was constantly mourning the loss of sons, who perished through the attacks of crocodiles, which seemed to single out this sole clan for death and let all the others go free. Finally one of the head chiefs was seized, whereon the remnant cried: 'We will stay here no more to be destroyed one by one, but will go forth and find a new home, where we may dwell in safety.'

"Down the Cross River, therefore, went all that was left of the Adiabo, till they came to a creek belonging to the Okkobbor people. In that place grew plenty cane too much, so it was called Ataw Abong, *i.e.* Place of Cane, a name which later was contracted into Atabong. There the new-comers settled and prospered exceedingly. Many piccans were born and grew up, till the tribe had more than regained its old strength. One day, while a great play was being given in the town, the head chief of Effiatt went by in a big, mighty canoe, attended by many followers. They were on their way to Esiet in the Ibibio country, but the tide was against them and they were forced to go slowly. Over the water came the sound of singing, and the chief said, 'This play is too sweet in my ears. Pull towards the beach, therefore, for I must land and see.'

"When the Adiabo saw the strangers, they received them very kindly, and said that they must spend all day and all night there and join in the play. The chiefs brought gifts of cloth for their visitors, and, in return, the people of Effiatt dashed them the loads of crawfish which they were on their way to sell.

"Now the daughter of the Chief of Atabong was very beautiful, and when the Prince of Effiatt saw her he at once fell in love. He therefore called a boy and, pointing her out, asked, 'Is that girl wedded or already bespoken?' The youth answered, laughing, 'If you wish to know such a thing as this, you had better ask her father.'

"This advice was followed, and the marriage arranged. In honour of the alliance another play was given, which lasted for four days. At the end of that time the Effiatt

left their new friends, and with them went the bride to her future home.

“Three or four months later, the Chief of Atabong said: ‘Now I must go to visit my daughter.’ He set out and soon reached Akwa Obio Effiatt, where his son-in-law lived. The latter was not in his house, and his people said that he had gone away to seek for crawfish. The visitor asked where he might be found, and they answered: ‘Across the big water, on the other side.’

“Thither, therefore, went the father-in-law, and was kindly welcomed. He was amazed at the amount of the catch which he saw, and the riches to be gained by this industry; so he stayed, learning the methods of the Effiatt, until the water spoiled, *i.e.* the fishing season was over.

“On his return, the chief told his own people of what he had seen, and, at their request, asked his son-in-law whether they also might join in fishing. The latter was willing, and showed him a good place in which to build his Ine (*i.e.* fishing settlement), and also indicated the stretch of water which should belong to the new-comers.

“From that time the people of Atabong have spent the whole of the fishing season on the far side of the estuary, and only come back to their homes during the rains.”

As at Ibeno and Eket, here also, in olden days, at the beginning of each fishing season, a man was chosen from among the poorer sort, and bound to a post at low tide, to be drowned by the rising water. Now a cow or bull is sacrificed in like manner, that the crawfish Juju may be pleased with the offering and, in return, bestow heavy catches upon its worshippers.

On the occasion of our first visit to Atabong we had gone by land from Idua in order to map the road, while the paddlers had been told to go round by water and meet us at Atabong beach. According to the manner of their kind, these did not see fit to put in an appearance; so, after waiting till the last moment, we were forced to hire others and embark on a crazy canoe, which chanced to be the only one available at the time.

Water poured in through the cracks on every side, and one of the police, a Yoruba over six feet in height, who

unfortunately suffered from a chronic dread of this element, burst into loud weeping, which continued at intervals during the whole journey. Between his sobs he announced that the paddlers were bad men who would "Drown us all for water." In spite of this gloomy prognostication, however, by the aid of continual bailing, we passed safely through the maze of unmapped lily-strewn streams out on to the broad bosom of the Cross River, down the swift-flowing current of which we were borne, and arrived some two hours later, by the light of a glorious moon, at Idua Oronn.

CHAPTER XXIV

SOME UNEXPLORED WATER-WAYS

EVERY few hundred yards the banks of the two great rivers, the Cross and Kwa Ibo, are broken to right or left by water-ways, varying in breadth from good-sized creeks to streams and brooks so small that their entrances are all but hidden behind a veil of tangled lianes. One of the most important and interesting of those flowing into the Kwa Ibo is the Ubium River, the lower stretches of which were known to few, while the upper reaches, according to unanimous native testimony, were as yet unexplored.

The current is swift and strong, while, even at the height of the dry season, the water is deep, for the most part, and navigable to within a few miles of the source. At one point, which all asserted was the highest to which a white man had as yet penetrated, it divides into three branches, but these join again farther on. Rumour had it that there was a water-way between this and Akaiya Creek, which flows into the Cross River ; but exploration proved the story to have no foundation in fact, as at least two miles of dry land intervene.

There is always a fascination in being the first to penetrate any region, and perhaps that may account, to a certain extent, for the peculiar charm of this river, dark and clear like the "black water" of Homer, overhung here and there by the branches of flowering trees, many new to our collection and some hitherto unknown to science. Among the most beautiful was a leguminous tree—of a species not yet determined by the authorities but allied to the new genus *Talbotiella*—sixty to seventy feet in height, which over-shadowed the river. The great tufts of its milky-white

blooms, the petals edged by a thin line of clearest crimson, stood out with startling distinctness from amid dark glossy leaves. Another, scarcely less beautiful, was a variety of *Uvariastrum* allied to the new species which we discovered last tour at Oban. Instead of springing only from the branches, however, in the ordinary way, the new flowers grew cauliflorously straight from the trunk, ten to a dozen cream-petalled pink-veined blooms, often three inches in length, borne on a single peduncle. We had been on the look-out for this tree for some time, as, long before reaching it, petals had been seen floating down stream, like fairy gondolas borne on the clear swift-flowing water.

When freed from snags and fallen tree-trunks, over which, during our voyage of discovery, the canoe often balanced perilously, or upon which we had to stand till a way could be cut to allow of passage, the new creek should open up to trade many miles of swamp land, thickly populated and rich in oil and piassava palms. The people of this region, who at first were so timid that whole towns fled on our approach, were soon pacified. They awoke to the advantage to be gained by the opening up of their lands, and, on their own initiative, begged me to arrange for traders to come and buy their nuts, kernels, and palm-oil. Owing to transport difficulties hardly more than a quarter of this rich harvest could hitherto have been garnered; while the rest had rotted uselessly, or sprung up into young saplings, in many cases so close together as to crush one another out of existence.

Of all those whose help was asked in clearing the creeks only the Ubium seemed unwilling to co-operate. A deputation of chiefs came "to complain" that "since they were born, they had never learned to manage a canoe!" It was, therefore, so they pleaded, impossible for them to cut through the tree trunks which had fallen and were blocking the water-way.

It was obvious that the objection given was not the real reason, but failure followed the most careful attempts to get at the true cause of their unwillingness. Once more, as so often, the best intentions of the white man were found to beat powerlessly against the dead wall of a world of



NEAR THE SOURCE OF THE UBIUM RIVER.



WOMAN POTTER AT IKOTORO.

thought and feeling utterly different from his own. It was not till a month later that the true reason was revealed, namely, dread of harming the sacred totemistic fish,¹ called by Ibibio Offott, which dwelt in these waters.

The comparatively high ground of this region, inhabited by Oronn and Okkobbor, is full of interest, more thickly wooded than the Southern lands, and with stretches of virgin bush here and there. Wherever the path leads past one of the curiously shaped ant-hills which, among the Ekoi, are called "bush-men" from their gnome-like form, a little hut is seen erected over the uncanny structure. Here—instead of being regarded as manifestations of beneficent powers and offered up in lieu of the human sacrifices now, to the great regret of the more wealthy section of the community, forbidden by White Rule—ant-hills are looked upon as the homes of evil spirits, and protective huts are raised over them, not in love, but in fear. Round some of these mounds lay the heads of animals sacrificed to propitiate the terrible inmates; while one was surmounted by a human skull which, in all probability, owed its presence to the same superstition.

In places, the bush showed signs of having been uncut for centuries, and, as one glanced through the leafy tangle, little groups of "ghost pots" were visible, marking the sites of graves; while occasionally more pretentious memorials might be discovered, consisting of from three to twenty carved figures, representing the man whom they commemorated at different stages of his career, surrounded by relatives, wives, and slaves.

One night, after a march through bush thick-strewn with graves, we arrived at Adut 'Nsitt to find the tents pitched beneath the shade of some fine trees which surrounded an open space near the village. It seemed an ideal camping ground, but the carriers all chose to seek hospitality in the town, on the plea that it was "cold too much sleeping over the graves of dead chiefs." Later, we learnt that the clear stretch of sand formed the burial place of the great men of the neighbourhood, and several arbour-like memorials were to be seen at its edge. Just before dawn an icy wind

¹ See p. 231.

sprang up, as if to strengthen the superstition as to the coldness of such sleeping-places.

Our next march led through country where all was gay and prosperous. Little family groups were to be seen beneath sheltering palm trees, cutting the ripe nuts from their clusters, or piling them in great, oblong market-baskets. These heaps make splendid splashes of colour, for, when ripe, palm-nuts shade from clear gold through orange to cherry and crimson, with here and there a splash of deepest purple, thus giving, in one, all the blended colours of our fruit and grain harvest. Small brown babies tottered up and down, getting in every one's way, or, tired with play, leant weary heads against the knees of busy mothers.

In other places yam-planting was in full swing. Men, women, and children were busy preparing ground, digging holes for small pieces of the great tubers, which are "set" much in the same way as potatoes at home, making mounds over those already planted, or fixing sticks to support the graceful vines.

This busy scene was disturbed by our arrival, for no sooner had the workers realised the fact that white women were of the party than, flinging down hoe, spade, and mat-chet, they ran along by the way-side, cheering with all their might. After these friendly folk had been left behind, we crossed a broad marsh crowded with azure-tinted *Halopegia*, and came to Itak, whence the inhabitants had fled on the rumour of our approach. The corporal, however, who was a native of these parts and therefore well informed as to local wiles, begged leave to visit some of the compounds. Our guide had suddenly announced that he had never been beyond this spot, so could not lead us any longer. It was therefore a relief to all when angry voices were heard from out a dwelling, and the corporal emerged, leading an old woman, whom he had found in one of the numerous "hidie-holes" with which such buildings abound.

The crone proved truculent enough, and refused to lead us to the next town; but, after some time, showed the way to a farm plantation of one of the chiefs, where we were fortunate enough to obtain a friendly guide.

Between the towns of Itak and Atiabang, the road was

lined, for long stretches, by miniature huts, beneath which, amid the usual pots, were to be seen human skulls obtained either from sacrificed slaves or slain foes.

Hereabouts, too, we came upon the principal town of refuge for "twin mothers" in the north-eastern part of the District. This is called Esuk Inwan Akaiya (the beach of the farm of Akaiya), and stands just above the shore of a creek, which, two miles farther on, flows into a still more beautiful water-way, nearly a quarter of a mile in breadth, and as yet unmarked on any map, although forming one of the great arteries of native trade. Busy canoes, laden with palm-oil puncheons for Idua-Oronn or Calabar, race and splash through the water, the rhythmic beat of their paddles keeping time to their songs, monotonous enough to European ears, yet often with a queer haunting charm all their own. On they sweep to the broad Cross River, past other creeks as yet unexplored and with enticing possibilities. At night, should the moon be new or on the wane, these canoes are made fast to some outstanding clump of mangrove roots. Fires are fanned into life behind the shelter of small native stoves carried for the purpose, and, on these, odorous messes of smoked fish and palm-oil are prepared for the evening meal. Often, in the darkness, the ruddy flames seem to fill the whole boat, and give it, from a distance, the look of some huge lamp of antique form, floating astray upon the dark water—in all, save size, like the "fire-boats of the dead" adrift upon the mighty bosom of Mother Ganges. Should the moon be at the full, however, the paddlers take advantage of her light to keep on their way throughout the night.

At such times, the weird melody of their strange chanties floats to an unbelievable distance on the still air, and is borne up the waters of many an unknown creek, to the shores of hidden villages cunningly screened from the eyes of possible raiders in old slave-dealing days.

Amid this mass of creeks lies one in which Chief Henshaw nearly lost his life. His account of the events which led to the adventure is so indicative of the state of affairs prevailing only a few years ago, that it needs no apology for being given in full. It is practically in his own words.

“ In the month of July 1897, the second son of Chief Osung Atanan of Odun Ukaw killed one of the women of his father's household. On the plea that she was a witch and had caused his brother to fall sick by her magic, he first murdered her ; then cut out the unborn babe from her body and slashed off its head, saying that he would make an end of such devil's spawn.

“ This was reported to me and I informed Government of the matter. As a result, the man was arrested, tried at Calabar Assizes, and sentenced to death by hanging in his native town ; so that all the people should take warning and understand that it was now Government time, and that such things might no longer be done.

“ Now Odun Ukaw is a very big town, one of the largest and most important in all Oronn part ; and when the head chief heard what Government proposed, he threatened that, should the white man attempt to hang his son, he would take measures to prevent it ; and all the men of his town agreed to stand by him.

“ The day before the one fixed for the execution, I sent for Osung Atanan himself and several of his most important chiefs to visit me at Oronn. There I entertained them so well that they did not notice the arrival of the launch bringing the District Commissioner of Calabar, Mr. Whitehouse, and Captain Hill, who was then head of the police ; with them was also the murderer. I feasted the father and his chiefs, and then induced them to lie down and sleep while I went with the white men to Ukpata beach ; giving charge to my people that all should be done so as to persuade the visitors, if possible, to stay at Oronn until the business was over.

“ In consequence, the young man was hanged in the midst of the town, while all the people ran round seeking the chiefs, for whose arrival they begged us to wait. Had these been present to take command, the inhabitants would certainly have fought to save the prisoner. As it was, we hurried and got the matter safely over. When all was finished and the body buried, we came back to Oronn, where the white men left me and went on themselves to Calabar. I went straight to break the news to the chief, who said :

‘ You shall see what will happen in consequence of this ! Had I been there, my son would never have been hanged ! ’ After saying this, he went home, swearing vengeance against the District Commissioner and myself.

“ In those days, there was a Minor Court at Ukpata, which is a dependency of Odun Ukaw. This I attended every Wednesday. The Assistant Clerk, Etetim Ene Okon by name, used to go beforehand on Tuesdays, to prepare the people, announcing : ‘ To-morrow will be Court Day. Those who have any complaint to make must come down.’ On this occasion he was going up as usual, but half-way to Odun Ukaw his friends warned him :

“ ‘ Do not go there to-day, for it is not safe, because the townsfolk are holding a very big meeting to consult what is to be done about the death of the young chief.’

“ Etetim did not listen to this warning, but went on, and, when he reached the market-place, according to the testimony of a boy who was with him, the people demanded why he had come. He answered, ‘ To tell you to prepare for Court to-morrow.’ On hearing this, one of the young men rushed forward and struck him, calling out, ‘ Go back.’ As Etetim was a very strong man, he at once felled his assailant, on which the whole crowd fell upon him.

“ This was on the twenty-first of September, about nine o’clock in the morning. They overpowered him, so many against one ! Then threw him down and flogged him to death. His body was carried into the Palaver-house and skinned ; then the skin was stretched out over a wall to dry, so that it might be used for a Juju drum. The flesh was cut up and a small piece sent to each of the neighbouring towns as a sign that they also were called upon to rise against Government. Some towns refused. Those who receive the flesh dry it in smoke, according to native custom ; then bear it forth at the death of any great chief, crying, ‘ Behold ! Here is the flesh of a man ! ’

“ About three o’clock a message came to me saying that the clerk had been seized by the people. At once I got my big canoe and went round. Luckily it was full tide and we came right up to the beach. There are two such near together, a big beach and a small one, the latter of which

belonged to the dead clerk, and was near his dwelling and the Court House. On arrival I learned that he had been flogged, and that people were gathering from every direction and swarming in with great noise; but the dead man's family had not yet heard that he was already killed.

"I told my boys to take the canoe round to the big beach, because, if we were attacked in this small place, we could not help ourselves. I therefore made them push off and turn the canoe, so that there would be a chance to escape in the open water. They obeyed, and I told the head chief of the place, Okon Ekpang, to go up and bid the others bring down the clerk, that we might judge the case in Court, if he had done any bad thing. After the chief had started, I said to some Calabar traders who chanced to be there: 'When he comes back, send and let me know what message he brings. Should the clerk return with him, bid them both follow me.'

"After that we pushed off from the beach, just beyond which the river takes a sharp bend. We had hardly turned this point, when a great noise was heard. All the people of the place flung themselves into the water, for they saw the enemy rushing down upon them, armed with guns and matchets. We pulled for home as hard as we could, paddling softly so as to make no noise, that they might not know of our whereabouts. Guns were fired from the shore, but none hit us.

"After we had gone, the enemy brought a great bowl, full of the blood of the slaughtered man, and poured it out before the threshold of his home. Thus was the news of his death announced to his people.

"Soon after I got back a messenger came to tell me all that had happened, at which I was very dismayed and at once reported it to Government. Next morning the District Commissioner of Calabar, Mr. Whitehouse, arrived with Captain Hill, Chief Magnus Duke, and sixty soldiers. Mr. Whitehouse did his best to induce the guilty towns to come in, but they refused and sent the message that we must come to meet them in the big market square. They chose this place because they could so easily have surrounded us there and killed us all by shooting from behind the cover of the encircling bush.

“ Three days later we went up by the Eyo Abassi road instead of the more usual route from Ukpata, by which they expected us, and where they had made ready to fight us. When we neared the town, the people came out in their hundreds against us ; but being unprepared and divided, after the first volley they broke and ran, and within fifteen minutes the place was taken.

“ There we found Odiong, the boy who had accompanied the dead clerk, and who was to be offered up that day to the dominant Juju of the town. He was chained fast in one of the houses, and was so paralysed by terror that he could not speak a word for three or four days—only gazed round him in a dazed way.

“ As a result, the head chief and about seven of the principal men who had caused the trouble were taken. They were tried in the Supreme Court and four were sentenced to death.”

The whole of this part of the District, from Ukpata to James Town, is a labyrinth of creeks, along the banks of which several towns were found, unvisited till now. The extraordinary girth and height to which the mangrove of this region attains came as a great surprise. In places the smooth pale boles shoot upward, straight and tall as Norwegian firs ; while, beneath, interlacing roots stretch, curve on curve, far as the eye can reach. Raised above these arches, as if on natural piles, little fisher-huts may be seen ; enveloped at evening time by a blue mist of smoke, in which the day's “ catch ” is dried.

At low tide the mangrove swamps are often fringed with long stretches of mud, some of which are so deep as to be pronounced bottomless. Many stories are told of hunters who, having shot egret or flamingo along these treacherous flats, are led by their prey to a place whence there is no returning. The most famous of these “ hell bogs ” is, as previously mentioned, known by the grim name of Usun Ekkpo, *i.e.* Ghost's road, from the number of victims drawn down in its slimy depths.

CHAPTER XXV

BEFORE GOVERNMENT CAME

As an illustration of the state of affairs existing before White Rule made its power felt in the land, the following account of events, which happened towards the close of the last century, may prove not without interest. It is told by Udaw Owudumo, son of the head chief of Ikot Atako, mentioned in the story, who is still alive.

“ Not very long ago two boys were born in one of the compounds of our town. As they grew up, people noticed that each was anxious to gain wealth by every means in his power, so that he might outshine the other. If the elder brother bought one cow, the younger, whose name was Udaw Afia, tried to get together money to buy two. Also if the elder wished to become a member of any society in the town, or proposed to marry another wife, the younger made every effort to do the same.

“ At length the elder brother got so weary of this continued rivalry, that he planned a way of ridding himself of it once and for all. He sought out some people who were known to be willing, for a price, to catch and kill men, or else sell them into far-off slavery. To the chief of the band he said :

“ ‘ My small brother tries to make himself as big a man as I. So you must kill him or sell him to a far-away people, that he may never trouble me any more.’

To this they answered :

“ ‘ Very well. If you are willing to pay our price, just let us know when a good chance comes to seize him.’

“ Soon after, Udaw Afia set forth to market at another town. When the elder brother learnt this, he went to his

confederates and said: 'If you hide yourselves by the side of the road this evening, you can easily seize the man on his return.' They did as he bade, caught Udaw Afia alone and unawares, bound his hands together and were thrusting a wooden gag into his mouth, when he started to call with all his might upon the name of my father, the head chief Owudumo, to come and help him.

"A man who chanced to be passing heard the cries and ran and told the chief, who went at once to the Egbo-house and beat the big drum to call all the people together. He bade them seek round the houses and in all the bush to find where Udaw Afia was hidden.

"In the course of the search, some of the men went to the house of a chief named Etuk Inyan Ukpenn, who told them that the captive had already been carried off. When my father heard this, he sent out parties to follow the slave roads. At his orders, bands scattered in every direction, and one of these came to the beach at Ikot Abiu Ata. There they found the man lying gagged and bound, about to be thrown into a canoe.

"The captors had not expected to be followed so soon, and were caught unawares. So when the rescuers, headed by my brother, Essien Owudumo, fell upon them, they ran away, leaving their captive, who was soon freed from his bonds and led home in triumph. When they returned, the chief caused a horn to be blown, to let the other search parties know that they could now come back, as the man was found.

"When the elder brother heard the news, he ran away to Opobo, thinking: 'I will hide myself here for a time.' Chief Owudumo sent to bid him come back and give explanation of what he had done; but he refused, thinking: 'If I go home, my small brother will harm me.'

"The chief sent to summon him again, but the man once more refused. Meantime Udaw Afia went to his own house, and believing that his elder brother was still trying to kill him, laid his plans accordingly.

"After a time, news reached the absent man that his wife had borne him a son, so he decided to go quietly back and visit his family.

"This was the chance for which Udaw Afia had been waiting. As the elder brother passed along the road, the younger sprang upon him out of the bush, bore him to the ground and cried :

" 'You wanted to kill me. Now I have caught you, I will kill you ! '—and without further word slew him there and then.

"Report was brought to the chief, who sent for the murderer and asked : 'Is it true that you have killed your elder brother ?' To which Udaw made answer : 'Yes. Had I not done so, he would only have tried to kill or enslave me again.' On this the chief bade him go to his house and stay there quietly.

"Now when he killed his brother he had cut off the head, which he bore home, leaving the body by the way-side. Then he set the skull before his door, and proudly pointed it out to all passers-by, saying :

" 'This was my elder brother. He wanted to kill me, but the Juju helped me and I killed him first. Now, so soon as the flesh has rotted from the bone, I will take the skull and clean it and use it for my mimbo cup.'

"To this the townsfolk answered :

" 'It is no matter that he was your elder brother. If you choose to make his head into a drinking-cup, you can do so, for you slew him. His body is therefore yours to treat as you will.'

"This thing happened a little time after Government came to our country—before white men had gained full power. However angry one may be with a brother, one is not allowed to do such things now" (!)

Another story more horrible, because the cruelty therein described seems utterly senseless and wanton, was related by the son of one of the principal Eket chiefs as typical of the state of affairs "before Government came." He declared that many people could vouch for the truth of the tale.

"In olden days," he said, "when our grandfathers were young, there lived a man at 'Nduo 'Ndu, on Ubium River. His name was Umaw Eti. He had neither father nor

mother. No one cared for him, and the only way in which he could find food was to snare small birds in the bush, or eat the sacrifices offered before Juju shrines.

“When food had been found in such a way, he used to take it to the Juju house, where a fire was lighted, in order to keep the building dry. Over this fire he cooked his chop, and on such food grew fat and strong. By the goodwill of the Juju he thrived, and, when war came upon the town, trusting in its protection he went in front to keep off the bullets, so that none of his friends should be harmed. So all believed that he had strong medicine, and when fighting finished other people came to be under him.

“Proud of his success, Umaw Eti sent for the Idiong man to come and make Idiong for him. The priest brought his boy to carry the Idiong bag, and, when they had entered the house, Eti shut the Idiong man into one of the rooms to carry out the rites and took the boy to help mend the fence round his compound. While doing this, he asked the boy: ‘Can you jump this fence?’ To which the lad answered ‘No.’ Umaw asked: ‘Why cannot you do this?’ And the boy said: ‘Because I am weak from hunger.’ Then the man himself jumped over the fence and told the boy to come and try to do it too. The latter said: ‘No! I have had no food since morning.’

“Then Umaw sent to call his wife, and when she came he said: ‘Get plenty yams. Make fufu and put fish and meat within.’ This she did, and, when all was ready, sent to tell her husband. The latter said to the boy: ‘Leave the fence and come and eat.’ When the lad came, he saw enough for five men, so ate what he was able and then said: ‘I have had enough.’ Umaw replied: ‘You told me you were hungry; so now you must finish up all. If you will not, I shall kill you.’ The boy tried hard, but could not finish it. Then Umaw said again: ‘If you do not make an end, I will kill you.’ The boy tried to run to his master, but Umaw caught him and cut off his head.

“Afterwards the murderer said: ‘I will go now and kill the Idiong man also.’ One of his wives heard this and ran and told the priest: ‘Take your Idiong and go.

If you wait, my husband will kill you.' The Idiong man said : ' Why should he do such a thing ? ' She answered : ' Your boy is already dead.' At once, seizing Idiong, he hid it in his bag, and ran to the main door, but the woman cried : ' Do not pass out by the front or my husband will see you.' The priest asked : ' How shall I escape ? ' On which the wife showed him the little back door.

" Shortly afterwards the husband came and found him fled. He asked his wife : ' Where is the man ? ' She answered : ' I don't know.' He looked round for Idiong and found this gone also, so he said : ' I believe you told him, and that is why he fled.' The woman answered ' No.'

" Nothing further was done on that day ; but on the morrow Umaw went to farm. The wife followed, and, after they reached the place, her small piccan began to cry. The mother took the babe and gave him breast ; but the husband said : ' I want people in my farm to work, not to suckle a piccan.' All went on working, but the piccan cried again and the mother crept back to give him breast once more. On that the father said : ' I told you that when you come to farm you are not to stop working to suckle your piccan.' So he took the babe and killed him ; on which the woman ran away weeping.

" This man did many such things. One day the mother of one of his wives came to him and he asked her : ' Can you smoke pipe ? ' She said : ' Yes. Sometimes also I eat tobacco in my mouth.' When she said this, he went to his house and brought many heads of tobacco and gave to her. She cut a little to put in her pipe, but he said : ' No. You are not to smoke. You are to eat up all these heads. When I asked about smoking, you answered about eating. Now you are to eat them up to the last bit.' The woman said : ' If I told you I used to eat tobacco, I meant only a little, now and again. It is not possible for me to eat all this at once.' Umaw answered : ' You must eat it or I will kill you.' In terror she tried to obey, but could hardly swallow more than one head, for so much tobacco hurt her heart. He called to the wife whose mother she was and, when the latter came, said : ' Look at your mother !

She told me she used to eat tobacco. I gave her many heads and bade her eat them ; now she is dying.' When the daughter began to cry, the man said : ' Keep quiet. If you make a noise I will kill you also.' So the woman made no further sound, but took the body and buried it secretly.

" Umaw did many, many other bad things. At length he fell sick, and half of him died while the other half was left alive. Then he had himself carried to the Idiong man and asked : ' What is the matter, that this curse has fallen upon me ? ' The priest answered : ' You have done so many wicked things. Now Abassi is punishing you ! ' Umaw asked : ' What must I do to grow whole again ? ' The Idiong man answered : ' There is nothing to be done.'

" After this the cruel chief lived thus for a whole year ; but then the other half of his body died also. On his burial all the townsfolk rejoiced greatly."

Okun of Idua Eket vouched for the truth of the following story, which he gave as a shining example of filial piety :

" A few years before Government came to our country, there was a chief of our town, Akpan Ete by name, who was a very great man indeed. Many slaves he had, both men and women. Cows and goats in great numbers were his also ; and he was a member of most of the principal societies of the place.

" When this man fell sick, he called his four sons round him and said : ' I do not think that I can be saved from this illness.' Then, turning toward the eldest, continued : ' Let me not die alone, but bury with me one man and one woman from among my slaves.'

" The son asked : ' Which of all your people do you choose for this service ? ' And the father mentioned by name those whom he would have.

" Not long afterwards the chief died, and the man and woman who had been chosen were put alive in the grave. Earth was filled in, and the whole well smoothed down.

" When everything was finished, the son thought : ' After all, one man and one woman are not much for a chief who has always had many slaves to do his will ! ' So he killed another woman, and, taking a sharp stick, drove it through her

head, fixing the body as an offering above the grave. After this had been done he said further : ' When my father comes to the ghost town, he will be a gentleman even as he was on earth, because his slaves will be there to serve him just as in life.'

" At the end of the funeral ceremony, a great feast was given to all the societies of which the dead man had been a member ; at which, in addition to other gifts, one goat was dashed to each. Yet this good son was not contented, and seven days later said :

" ' After all, three slaves are not much for a man such as my father. I think I will spare him one more of my household.' So he chose out another slave, ordered chop to be cooked and gave it to the victim with palm wine to drink ; then ordered him to bathe. After this, he himself painted the man over with black pigment, robed him in fine clothes, then led him down to the grave and there killed him. Afterwards he fixed the new skull near that of the woman. Next he sent and bade the townsfolk come together as before and made another feast. Afterwards all the sons and daughters donned their gayest robes, and went round to the market-place singing : ' Nothing that was fitting has been withheld. The rites for our father are well finished to-day.' "

It must have been a heart-breaking experience for those first pioneers, who sought to implant the rudiments of justice and charity, as understood by nations like ourselves, in such alien soil ; and the way that this task was carried out—however unknown and unpraised—was perhaps as heroic as anything in history.

Incidents which illustrate the peculiarly macabre turn of mind typical of people such as these were more frequent and forcible in the early days of white administration than now. To give an instance, which happened when Mr. E. D. Simpson was in charge of Eket District.

One day a grey-faced messenger sought the presence of the District Commissioner to inform him of a strange craft tethered during the night upon the little Government beach. It was in the shape of a canoe formed from a

man's body, split down the middle of the ribs and held apart by bars of wood just like the seats of a boat. The hands were lashed to the sides and the feet bound together to form the prow. Firmly fixed near the head was a piece of paper bearing the words, "A canoe with which to find the murderer."

Until White Rule grew strong in the land, the chiefs of 'Mkpokk and Ikot Akpa-Atekk were lords paramount of all the country west of the Kwa Ibo, and used to send out and capture slaves from neighbouring villages. Till quite recent times, indeed, these two towns were great slave-dealing centres, and should boys or girls stray forth alone, they were liable to be seized, thrust into a sack, and carried off to be sold to the "slavers." Tradition reports that "Portuguese" sailing vessels, engaged on this nefarious traffic, penetrated "by means of tide and breeze" up the Kwa Ibo as far as the mouth of the Awa River.

Whether or no there be any truth in the story, a grim relic of "Portuguese slavers" is said to exist at 'Mkpokk, where the skulls of two white men are reported to be kept, as a great Juju, in one of the local shrines. The story, though heard from many sides, is unverified.

To the east of the Kwa Ibo, the greater number of slaves were either taken straight to Calabar, there to be handed over to European traders, or via Ibeno, along the shore to Effiatt (Tom Shott). In the absence of slaving ships, those west of the river were also led down by the last-named route.

Even in this part of the world, the cruelties practised by the chiefs of Ikot Akpa-Atekk were looked upon as excessive. In this town never a week passed by, it is said, without a man being sacrificed. The usual way of bringing this about was for one of the official executioners to mark down a victim quietly mending nets or going about his usual work; then, creeping up from behind, the murderer struck off the head and bore it to the lord of the town. Immediately, on sight of the trophy, the chief used to send to the dead man's compound, and seize all the property, including the family, who were sold as slaves.

Till four or five years ago, human victims are stated

to have been offered up in the neighbouring bush ; and surrounding towns still suspect the men of Ikot Akpa-Atekk of continuing the practice in secret.

While marching through this region with the small escort accorded me to impress upon the people, who showed signs of unrest, that Government was determined to see law and order upheld, an incident occurred which showed the opinion with which they are still regarded by loyal supporters of White Rule.

Camp had been pitched in the centre of the town, and all save sentries were peacefully sleeping, when suddenly a loud report right in our midst brought every one, in varying degrees of undress but fully armed, to the scene of the supposed attack. Not a man doubted but that the townsfolk were keeping up their ancient reputation for ferocity, and had assembled to wipe us out. It was finally found that the alarm was caused by a coco-nut which had fallen from a neighbouring tree and rolled near one of the fires, where the heat caused it to explode. The escort's hopes of a little excitement were thus proved vain, and the men sought their couches with many shakes of head, sadly murmuring : " These people plenty bad too much ! "

Among the Eket a faint tradition yet lingers of " a priest who slew the slayer and must himself be slain." This came to our knowledge through the following story, told, with slight variations, by two well-known Ibibio :

" In the olden time, far away from here, there dwelt a people called Ikot Ako Anyan. The last name was given them because they worshipped the great Juju ' Anyan.'

" Every year, at the time when the yam vines first clothe their poles with green, the people of Ikot Ako used to come down into the Ibibio country, and ask that an old chief might be delivered over to them, to become priest of their Juju until the same season came round again. When this request had been granted, they went away, leaving a blessing upon the farms.

" Year after year the Ibibio pleaded that, in exchange for the annual toll levied upon their chiefs, a part of the

Juju might be left with them. For a long time the strangers refused, but at length said : ' We agree.'

" Then the Ibibio were very glad, and brought small earthen bowls, as they were bidden. These were about six inches across and three in breadth. A little of the Juju medicine was laid in each and given to the head man of every town and village with the order :

" ' Set this by the place whence your drinking water is drawn, and over it build a small shrine. Before you eat of the new yams, bring thither an offering. Dried fish you must bring, together with palm-oil and bunches of plantains ; jars of water also, taken from the river when the tide is at the full. Choose one man from every place to be the guardian of the Juju. He it is who shall take the offerings, cook them, and mix them with the new yams.

" ' While the feast is being prepared you must give a play with dancing and rejoicing, crying aloud : " Our time for the eating of new yams has come ! " When this is over, every one may feast without fear of sickness or trouble.

" ' Should a childless woman come before the Juju with like offerings, her husband lays them in the hands of the priest saying : " My wife has never borne a child. Now, I beg you, play the play of this Juju, that the spirit may hear and send her a piccan before the year's end." Then the prayer is almost sure to be granted.'

" Such a child is named Anyan in honour of the Juju, and, so soon as it is old enough to leave the house, the mother must carry it to the shrine by the water-side, while her husband attends them with the offering ordained. For such an one, fowls, eggs, and coco-yams are forbidden. Should any child of the Juju eat of these, he would surely die.

" Of all the Ibibio chiefs led away to be priests, none ever came back, for each died within the year, and another was chosen in his stead. Some say the Juju killed them ; but others state that each year the new priest slew his predecessor, knowing full well that in twelve more moons he must himself be slain."

It was, unfortunately, impossible to get more definite information. We were told, vaguely, that the Ikot Akos

never came to this country any more, nor did the Ibibio go to theirs. Moreover, these were stories of long ago, forgotten by all save a few old men. Therefore it was no longer possible to learn anything further.

A year later, while engaged on a study of the Ibo people, good fortune brought us to a town of some five thousand inhabitants, the spiritual ruler of which owns that each of his predecessors was "a priest who slew the slayer and must himself be slain." The present holder of the dignity, naturally, showed some reticence concerning the steps by which he himself succeeded to office.

L'ENVOI

LEST the reek of blood, which ascends only too noticeably from any attempt to give an actual picturing of places and peoples such as these, should offend those used to the gentler phraseology of civilised lands, I would add that, in my humble opinion at least, there is great cause for thankfulness in the change already effected. Compared with what has been done, what yet remains to do, vast as it is, seems so small as to give cause for the utmost hope and courage ; while with the coming of railways, and consequent opening up of the country, we may hope that progress will be still more rapid in the future.

Possibly, too, the darker aspects of many rites and beliefs may be attributed, in great part at least, to the shadow cast over the minds of the people by that dense tropical forest which covers such vast stretches of the West Coast, or by the mangrove swamps which surround low-lying lands. In open sun-lit country, like the wide plains of Northern Nigeria and the Sudan, the more revolting customs seem to be dying out, as was the case in Egypt with the cutting of the bush, and in Europe with the thinning of the great forests.

Sir Thomas Holdich, in his more than kind remarks concerning this study of the Ibibio, was good enough to say : " As the world of geographical research gets narrower and narrower from day to day, it is all the more important that attention should be concentrated on the human element in geography." ¹ Conversely, perhaps, it may be permitted me to point out that geographical environment as a factor in the evolution of racial character has hardly yet received the attention it deserves on the part of ethnologists.

¹ *The Geographical Journal*, September 1914, p. 305.

With the growth of understanding, the attitude of contemptuous ridicule, too often shown by men of our race and day toward alien faiths and modes of thought, must necessarily lessen. Considering the short distance which separates ourselves from a time when superstitions hardly less cruel than those of West Africa were rife among us, is it much to plead for patience and charity of judgment on behalf of peoples so different, and to whom so far less advantages have been accorded than to ourselves?

To the present writer, at least, it seems, speaking with the diffidence befitting the humblest of pebble-gatherers on the shores of so boundless an ocean, that West African religions, as a whole, contain a greater element of spirituality than has usually been credited to them—just as the mentality, potential at least, of the African appears of a higher order than that generally conceded. Only by the good-will of the black men will it ever be possible for more than the faintest idea of his complicated psychology to be grasped by the white; and could but the educated negro be brought to understand that he has infinitely more to gain than lose by recording every scrap of information concerning native customs and beliefs—omitting nothing and concealing nothing—such a book might be written as has never yet seen the light of day.

At the end of this World-war, into which we were forced, not for ourselves alone, or even primarily, but in defence of the weak and helpless, there lies before us a chance such as surely has been granted to no Empire since the world began—the mighty task of educating, in the true sense of the word, the teeming millions of our vast tropical dependencies: those millions who, irrespective of race and creed, rallied, in the hour of danger, with a loyalty and devotion beyond all words, to the aid of the Motherland. Surely such a Brotherhood-in-arms can but leave us with deeper sympathies and truer understanding for the work to which we are called.

In defining the meaning of education it is perhaps permissible to quote the words of Sir Frederick Lugard, the Governor-General of Nigeria:

“In the first place, I hold that the most important

function of education is the formation of character, and by the word 'character' I mean the principles and standards which guide and control thought and action, and involve the exercise of self-control and discipline.

"The second most important function of education is to adapt the individual to his environment, so that he may have every prospect of leading a life both happy and progressive, so far as he himself is concerned, and useful and stimulating to the community in which he lives. . . . I observe in the public writings of our educated classes here some bitterness and some tendency to suspicion instead of co-operation, which does not seem to indicate that education has brought happiness. And, after all, there are but two things which are worth living for—happiness in our personal and individual lives, and usefulness and sympathy in our relations with the community in which we live."

Hitherto, education has too often been confounded with the eradication rather than the development of indigenous qualities. Perhaps the best of all definitions of the object of true education may be found in the lines written on a great Englishman who gave his life for Africa :

Into the sour to breathe the soul of sweetness,
The stunted growth to rear to fair completeness. . . .
And to the sandy waste bequeath the fame
That the grass grew behind him where he came.

Firmness, strength, and the sympathy born of understanding are surely the qualities most needed for the task which lies before us ; for only the strong will ever lead people such as these along the road of true civilisation. It is but a platitude to say that there is no highway to successful teaching save the hard and thorny path of learning ; yet we cannot but admit, however regretfully, that "our Friend the Enemy" has been more wideawake than ourselves in grasping the importance of a study of native customs and beliefs. Indeed, it has been remarked to me by men, whose position in the Protectorate lends weight to their opinions, that the people of these regions are mere "mud-fish" of whom there can be nothing worth studying or recording. In reply to this—and excuse, if need be, for

this long volume—I would venture to quote the words written, long ago, of Peter Peregrinus of Maricourt in Picardy, by one of the greatest of Englishmen :

“ He is ashamed that anything should be known to laymen, old women, soldiers, ploughmen, of which he is ignorant.” And again : “ The wiser men are, the more humbly will they submit to learn from others ; they do not disdain the simplicity of those who teach them. . . . Many things are known to the simple and unlearned which escape the notice of the wise. . . . Let no one, therefore, . . . look down upon the lowly, who have knowledge of many secret things which God has not shown to those renowned for wisdom.”

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